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NO WINE IN HIS CART

Meridel Le Sueur

STELLA JIGGLED THE PHONE, the connections in these rural telephones were always difficult. Why, why weren't they in town when something important was happening. And no papers until tomorrow morning. Such a hot day too . . . "Hello . . . Hello . . . I want to get Minneapolis . . . yes, yes the stock exchange. What IS the matter—Arnold Gregory—the stock exchange."

Stella looked at Henrietta, the housekeeper, who stood in the door. The two women looked at each other while Stella listened at the phone. Henrietta seemed to be listening too. "I was wondering how the strike is going," Henrietta said. The two women looked at each other. "That's what I am trying to do, get my husband," Stella said. Henrietta looked at her. She thinks I don't know anything about strikes, Stella thought, my father was in many strikes. Both women looked out the window down the hill to the lake. It was such a hot day, the hills stood still in the heavy tawny sunlight. The corn was ripening in the garden, the long silky leaves shining quite still like green swards in the sun. Stella watched the tiny fishermen on the lake and listened to the small sounds in the black space of the phone. From where she was sitting at the phone she could look straight from their glassed room down both sides of the hill, on one side sat the fishermen, on the other side, beyond the tennis court she could see the Sicilian wine cart Arnold's father had brought back from Italy. All morning she had looked, from time to time, at the fishermen sitting quite still on the glassy lake and not once had they pulled up a fish. They looked burned to a char with their black poles out over the shimmering water. She watched, but no, they never once pulled in a fish. Weren't there any fish in that lake but surely Arnold would have fish in his lake . . . it wasn't possible. "Henrietta, I wonder if there are any fish in the lake?" she said, holding down the receiver; "I'll have to call again, why is there no answer?" The silence was thick with heat. It seemed as if something were about to spring out of it right behind your shoulders, as if someone were spying in the still heat.

"I hope they catch something," Henrietta said. Stella looked at the fishermen. "I know that they are pretty hard up, they're probably fishing for their supper."

Stella's heart gave a start. For some reason it had not occurred to

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her that they were not playing a game, fishing for sport. "Hello, hello," she said, "Yes yes, yes that's my connection. Hello . . . hello . . ." She strained every nerve to hear, the voice came muffled, from far, far away. "Arnold . . . Arnold . . ." she cried, "Hello, yes this is Stella. Listen I want to know something. I want to find out about the strike . . . yes . . the strike." He mumbled something she couldn't hear, then repeated it, "Yes, Oh yes this evening. I know but I want to know now. What, what?" she shook the phone in exasperation, "I can't hear a word," she shouted, "What? I know I'm shouting but I want to hear. What? Yes . . . Hello . . . Hello . . . He's gone." A terrific rage swept through her, why had he hung up like that? Why had he mumbled. She felt like screaming, like tearing the handsome room apart. "Get whatever you want for supper Henrietta, I don't care what it is, and I don't want to take the baby out this afternoon. I don't want to see anybody. If anybody calls I'm not here. I'm not here at all."

When Henrietta left she stood in the room like an imbecile she stared at the bowl of Chinese waterlillies. She looked out the windows down the handsome lawn, the lake, the tennis court, everything, all made by Arnold. Oh, Stella has made a good marriage, an excellent marriage, what a break for a girl like that, a Yale man, plenty of money. It was a break to marry money . . . still these fishermen did not catch a thing. Arnold had made the lake and had put fish in it but perhaps they were all gone, yes they must be, she had not seen them draw in a single fish.

Yes she had everything she wanted, the heir to the Gregory millions lay upstairs, about to have his dinner but she didn't want to see him today. You went along for days, did things, had fun, then suddenly you collapsed. You could not move an eyelash; everything was meaningless and you thought way back six months before and you wondered what you had been doing all that time and you could think of a dress you had gotten, something good to eat, some conversations like a dream and for the rest, gone, gone without a trace.

She had to get out of the house, so she went down towards the old wine cart which she loved. Every little man so gayly painted on it reminded her of her own father. The great coloured wheels were bright in the sun. She climbed up and looked at the signs of the zodiac painted in the center, and everywhere were the faces of men like her father's—ancient, long, forgotten workmen picking grapes, carving, hammering, carrying faggots, and women nursing babies, cooking, bending, lifting. A gaity seemed all around the car, you could feel the surge and push of many men and an active abundant life of bustle still around the cart. Why had Arnold's father brought it back from Sicily, had it meant something to him? Or was it only a curious possession. When she was lonely for the raucous, hand to mouth, terrible and yet abundant life of her parents she

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went down to the wine cart. All the curious little painted men, the wide mouths, the workman's body like her father's. The body of a workman was the same everywhere, the cart was covered with the tiny bright figures in every posture and attitude, striking an anvil to shoe a horse, gathering, treading the grapes,—the same sensitive body moulded close to its labour, a worn tool.

She sat up bolt in the bright sun. Why had Arnold's body been distasteful to her, his white hands, his white narrow chest, self conscious, without use. Making money never made use of man's body, the smell of it got on him. Perhaps a woman never really could love the body of a money making man . . . could it be true? She put her hand down on the burning wood of the wine cart and cried. The sun lay warm on her hair, shoulders, in the pit of her back. She did not know when she stopped crying but she lay still in the bottom of the wine cart and the warm sun seemd to drown her. There was not a sound, everything stood quite still. The sunlight moved over her hair, her body. Everything but the sun seemed to stand quite still. In the spring when they had come out from the city there had been larks everywhere making the air seem like water for carrying the sound that came up out of the misty spring like bubbles breaking over them but since the heat and no rain there hadn't been a bird sound. There was not a bird now . . . still as a mouse.

There seemed to be a presence creeping on the lawn. She thought if she sat up and looked she would see some colossal force without face slowly rise up the lawn, pluck the house like a vile weed and crush it and leave the bald pate of the hill with the trees silently growing. She could bear it no longer and sat up, her head seemed thrust up into a golden syrup of heat. The stillness was awful, not a sound. The hills seemed to loom dark in the heat and she could see very leaf on the tree distinctly. She had the impression of spying on something.

Playing a game, it seemed to her in half drowse that the fishermen far down below must be pulling in fish when she wasn't looking. Arnold had everything, he certainly would have fish in his lake. An awful grin seemed to split her face. She thought if she would look away and then back quickly she would see them pulling in a fish but there they sat as if carved out of burnt wood, smoking a little in the heat.

Stealthily she looked at the warm bodied hills in smooth mounds and Arnold's young shrubs and trees seemed to be wilting. The house had been a wedding present so the anciet trees stood outside the sharp cut trimness of the paths and hills, and beyond the brush and the strong upmounding hills with their soft fur like on animals. She felt as if spying on them She always felt that Arnold's shrubs and things belonged to the social world and not to the natural one anyway. She tried to see into the trees to see if she might spy a bird waiting for rain but she could only see the

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heat far inwards permeating the tree so its seemed to swim in the dancing air.

She felt so curiously as if she were spying as if some little peekhole opened up and she would see into something, like once she had sat on the back stairs looking through the butler's door at a tea, now she lay down again and let herself spy on Arnold and she saw his fine surface but what was in him? She had a great excitement as if about to draw something out. You could go on living with Arnold for a thousand years, pleasantly, even gaily and you would never know anything about him, you would never have a quarrel, you would never grow into something different, even into a beast. It was as if he were manufactured like his silly little estate. She felt excited as if she had discovered something. The perfect husband, she thought, he is the perfect husband and no husband at all. In the heavy summer stillness it was as if her mind had shouted this and she waited to be shot for treason but the world did not shift nor move, the furry hills, tawny, curved, ached towards the sun.

She stood up as if drunk, in the wine cart, and recalling some gaminry of her childhood, she spat at the house.

Arnold came home at six. He didn't look as if the heat had touched him. She seemed to see him too clearly, as if she had never seen him before. He kissed her and she drew back but he didn't notice. He smiled at her. He carried himself very tall as if he was always being what he thought a man ought to be, a Yale type perhaps. "Listen, Arnold, for heaven's sake not so close, it's so hot and I'm all in, there hasn't been a breath of air."

"Look at those fishermen fishing down there?" he said.

"Haven't I been looking at them all afternoon?" He moved away and looked annoyed at her.

"This heat is unheard of," he said, "such a prolonged spell."

She felt she still had one eye closed as if cunningly spying on him. Yes, she thought, I've married above me. Those fishermen can't be really fishing, it's all a part of the game. "Won't they catch anything?" she said.

"What is it dear?"

"Those fishermen . . ."

"Next year I'll have to bring in some more fish."

"You mean put fish in the lake?"

"Yes," he flicked over the evening paper in his long white hands.

Stella suddenly wanted to strike him. She walked over and looked out the window, a purple haze was rising from the sun drunk earth. Arnold made an exclamation, she turned surprised and caught a close, cruel expression on his small face. She cried out without thinking, "Arnold what is it? What is the matter?"

"A great deal is the matter," he said in a terrible precise way. "We are going to fix them."

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"The strikers," she cried. The great change in her own feeling had made her forget them.

"Yes, he said, "I was at a meeting this very afternoon. The citizens are going to organize and break the picket line. They should deputize every citizen of the town and go down there."

"The citizens. . ." she repeated, her blood going cold in her. She had never seen the man sitting across from her, never known him.

"But, Arnold, who are the citizens?"

"Every respectable citizen," he repeated, his face lean and mean, "all of them."

"Why, Arnold, I never saw you like this, haven't they a right to organize?"

"They're not running our business. We'll show them who is the head of this country."

She thought of all his humanitarian ideas, the right of assemblage, Jeffersonian democracy about which he was fond of talking, but she said nothing. Something seemed to stand visible in the room between them at last, to emerge out of the heat. The fishermen were still sitting in the dusk fishing for their supper. The emergence was so clear that she thought she would scream.

Henrietta stood in the doorway announcing supper. Arnold got up, she walked in front of him but their life was over, the doorway was unreal, the mahogony table with its summer cloth. She sat down like a ghost and he sat opposite, his face flushed, his eye narrowed coldly. He went on to tell her about the meeting, about the battle of Bulls Run there had been that afternoon between the police and the strikers, he told about a street full of men standing side by side like a tide and cracking the bulls over the head, driving them back, stopping trucking completely and the women stood side by side with them . . .

"The women?" she cried, "were there women there?" Her poor mother had wanted her to marry above her.

"Many women," he said, "even young girls. It was disgusting. They probably brought in a lot of thugs from Chicago, beat up the policemen in the performance of their duty, to protect life and property."

"The women were there," she said, then they weren't marrying above them any more.

Henrietta brought the salad. She was listening to everything, Stella could tell by her dilated eyes. She must try and keep her temper. The green fluffy leaves sat on the salad plates from Carcasonne. Why, half the things they had were peasant things, everyone brought them back from Europe. There on the dishes from Carcasonne was the same tiny figure, the little workman's figure, dogged, real, bending now under a load of faggots. On every plate he stood bending a little with the faggots on his

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back, his black hat pulled down over his face. She saw thousands of him—multiplied.

"We're going in there tomorrow," he was saying.

She wanted to penetrate, to destroy him. "That's hideous," she cried. "That's dastardly, where's all your fine words, the right of free speech, assemblage, the right to unionize, what's come of it all. You know they don't get much.: I know how much they get. I've known it all my life . . ."

He looked at her coldly, "You'd better go to your room," he said.

"I won't," she cried.

Then he said in a low cutting voice, "You'd be in that mess yourself if I hadn't married you."

"Yes," she said coldly. The room seemed to dissolve in worm eaten wood. The three fishermen still sat in the dusk, waiting. They might get up in anger and come towards the house. All the figures from the wine cart might spring out and come stealthily up the hill and surround the house.

She said to him, jeering, "Are you really going down there tomorrow, all you business men to fight the strikers?"

"Yes," he said, "We are."

"Then you'll get hurt." She said with satisfcation.

"Why do you think so?"

"I know so," she said, "You can't beat them."

"We'll be at them all right," he said. "We've got equipment. We're going to buy arms and tear gas." It angered her bitterly that he should be excited about this destruction as he had never been about anything before.

"You'll get hurt," she said bitterly, "you better mind. You'll get hurt."

"We'll show them," he said.

"Yes, you'll show them," she said and an awful laughter tore through her, for she knew the curious deep life in those many men, how all the many hungers could rise up . . . Why had she given up her many hungers for this . . . "You . . ." she cried in contempt knowing his pale body as if it had been dead under water and she shook with humiliation and grief to know how she had been with him, born him a child, "You're through," she cried, "You're through, there's no wine in your cart . . ." The fishermen started to row towards shore.

"Stella," he said, shaking her.

"That's all right," she said, "I know now . . . And you're lost, you're lost already. You better not go down there tomorrow, if you care for your poor hide . . ."

"I'll go," he said with his little courage.

"You'll get hurt," she said and she thought . . . I hope he is killed . . . I hope he can die. . ."

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SOMEBODY AND SOMEBODY ELSE AND YOU

Brother, consider as you go your way,
hemmed in by houses or flanked by fields,
conjunctions of roads through midland plains
of grain, watching dried cornstalks sway
dead and cracking in the wind's running:
who spews pennies on the streets of cities?
who jams the faucet, holds rain from crops?
and who reverses this?

They've got a big paunch planted in a soil
rich with minerals of the U. S. Treasury,
kept moist continually with oil (and explosions
and many charred bones on the grass keep the earth
fecund) kept living in a protracted birth
forecasting strangulation.

They who have reaped your harvest
offer you the stalks. They
have teeth and fangs but their breasts
are dry, sucked empty. They have seen
millions of you stretching skeletal
hands toward them. They have been
deaf to everything you've had to say.

But you go your way, brother. They will go theirs.
By the time you meet you will have gathered
mass enough to challenge their right of way.

Maybe there won't be any doughnuts and coffee,
maybe you'll go a long way before you find
a house to shelter you, a bed to sleep in nights
and somebody to lie with, closely, and feel
here at last you've a moment for breathing
easily, peacefully, without hurry.

But when have you had a house
for nightrest and a place
to sleep in without rats

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gnawing in your head and
somebody with everything
vital and whole and real?

You can read it in the papers every day
about somebody and somebody else found dead
in a furnished room (and think of all the bother
for the poor landlady, cleaning the mess away)
and nobody knows why they did it or who
they are or where the hell did they come from anyway
and no relations are there to claim the bodies
because their relations are far far away
in Chicago maybe, or Brooklyn, say.

The coroner will chant his Death-by-Suicide dirge
and nobody'll know
that somebody and somebody else have hit the eternal hay.

And maybe in the very same sheet you'll read
how somebody and somebody else are dead,
a couple of Mexicans this time. Headlines:
STARVING MEXICAN PEONS EAT GRASS, DIE.
You probably won't see it (it's in 12-point lightface,
Babe Ruth and Roosevelt rate 48-point bold)
but read it if you find it among the want ads.
Doughnuts to grass it will leave you cold.

Elsewhere in a city, Milwaukee maybe,
somebody'll say, "Isn't it terrible Mamie?"
staining the newsprint with everready tears
"and just think of it Mamie dear they died
without even an uncle around to bury them."

But you, brother, think as you go your way
reading this in papers under your flophouse mattress,
you know who pours the pennies and the lead, you know
who rots the watered crops, you know
who makes the walls of barns to sag
inward on emptiness
who waves a flag
and blows hot air through a star-spangled trumpet.

while crops in fields and faces in streets
go slowly empty and yellow.

EDWIN ROLFE

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POETRY AND SOCIALIST REALISM *

N. Bukharin

THE ACTUAL THEME OE MY SPEECH is the problems which arise in the work of poetic creation in the Soviet Union, but before I proceed to it it would be as well to examine critically a number of general questions of poetic creation in view of the many instances of unclarity on the point. This lack of clarity affects our literary criticism in particular. Our literary criticism plays a great role, but not always a constructive one.

First of all, poetry as such. It is quite clear that one must differentiate between particular characteristics of the language of poetry and the corresponding poetic thought, because thought is closely and indissolubly bound up with language.

The art of poetry is the fixing of emotional experience in words. As compared with science, poetry has a "warmer," temperamental, picturesque and metaphorical basis. Poetic labour and its product poetry is a special form of social activity and, despite the specific nature of poetic creation, it is subjcet to the laws of social development.

As the fixing of emotional experience in words, poetry is the mediator in the world of feeling. However, these feelings and these experiences are the feelings and experiences of historic-social human beings and in a class society of class members. Poetry is a social product, one of the functions of concrete, historic society, and it reflects in its own form the special characteristics of the age and, where it is produced in class society, of its class.

The objective and active significance of the social function of poetry consists, speaking generally, in the reproduction of the experience and education of character, in the reproduction of certain group psychologies.

Generally speaking, the most burning problem is considered to be that of content and form. This question is one of particular urgency at the moment, as we are faced once again and in all seriousness with the problem of the cultural heritage in general and with the problem of mastering the technique of art in particular.

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*This article by Bukharin as well as the article by Johannes R. Becker following this are excerpts from speeches made at the recent All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers held in Moscow.

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How can we learn from the old masters, from the classics and their predecessors? The general answer to this question is given by the *materialistic dialectic,* according to which the "negation" is not a simple process of destruction, but a new phase in which, to speak with Hegel, "the old exists in a higher form." In this type of "movement" a "succession" is possible which dialectically represents both a breach with the past and its peculiar perpetuation. The truth is that a whole series of factors begin to lead a new life in other relations and in another framework, so that an "all-unity" is maintained.

When we regard the level of our poetry we must confess that we are still very backward, that we have taken only the first few steps along the world historic path of the new poetic culture. In comparison with the gigantic content of life, the content of our poetry is pale. Our poetry has not yet raised itself to the level of understanding the whole significance of our epoch.

And here we arrive at another question: the question of the multiplicity and unity of poetic material.

Once when dealing caustically with buorgeois political economy Marx wrote that it was "a highly moral science" and that its real ideal was "the ascetic but usurious miser and the ascetic but productive slave." In a biting characteristic of the hypocrisy of bourgeois economic teachings, Marx wrote: "Abstinence, the renunciation of worldly pleasures and of all human desires. The less you eat and drink, the fewer books you buy, the less you go to the theatre, to the ball or to the public house, the less you think, love, theorise, sing, paint, fence, etc., and the more you save, the greater will become the treasure that neither moths nor rust shall corrupt, your *capital.*"

These searing remarks throw a light on the positive opinions of Marx. Marxian Communism has as its aim the illimitable and multifarious development of human desires. It wants a full and all-round development of all the potentialities of man, and not a poverty-stricken, one-sided mutilation of man in this or that direction.

Love, theoritise, paint, think and fence—Marx certainly did not place these non-comparable things side by side without deliberate intention. All these things are no "sin," but thoroughly excellent functions in the life of man for whom labour is the "first" function. This is the direction in which we are now going. We have tremendous difficulties to overcome and we have to fight every inch of our way, but we are going forward. And from this follows the compelling conclusion: *The material of poetic creation must be in accordance with the multiplicity of our great epoch and all its contradictions.* Unity must be obtained from the standpoint from which the material is used and not by the unification itself. This standpoint is the standpoint of the victorious struggle of the proletariat.

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If we need a multiplicity of poetic material, it is not difficult to see that as a result of the alliance of form and content a multiplicity of poetic form is also necessary.

The rhythm of an elegy and rhythm of a soldiers' song cannot be the same, because the resonant aspect of the figure is at the same time its emotional content aspect. But if we admit the great multiplicity of poetic material and consider it desirable, and, as a consequence, also the greatest possible multiplicity of poetic form, what is in this case the unifying factor of form? The answer to this question is: The unity of this multiplicity will be obtained by the unity of style or the unity of method.

The forms of poetic creation must be its most multifarious forms which are made into a unity by a uniform great style or by the method of socialist realism. I shall devote the last part of my speech to the question of *socialist realism*. Dialectical materialism is the philosophical basis of socialist realism. Socialist realism is that special method in art which is in accordance with dialectical materialism. It is the transference of dialectical materialism into the world of art.

Socialism realism differs from simple realism in that it always places in the centre of attention the representation of socialist construction, the proletarian struggle, the new socialist men and women, and all the often complicated "relations and intermediaries" of the great historic process of our day.

Is this the only difference? Or has socialist realism any special methodological and consequently also style peculiarities which differentiate it from bourgeois realism? Naturally there are also such factors. These factors are closely connected with the content of the material and the conscious aim of its authors, which is dictated by the class position of the proletariat. With the development of socialist society the difference between physical and mental labour will gradually disappear. A new type of human being will develop in whom intellect is no longer apart from will. He really recognise the world in order to change it. Contemplation of the object, simple representation of the object without any attempt to show the tendency of movement, without any attitude towards the practical alteration of the material world, will gradually disappear into the past.

To a certain degree the old realism was anti-lyrical, while the old lyric form was to a certain degree anti-realistic. Socialist realism can take its alignment from humanity only. In the last resort socialism is the development of new human qualities, the enrichment of the ideological content, the development of the multiplicity of humanity and the abolition of the poverty of humanity divided into classes, into narrow occupational categories, and into urban and rural dwellers. The whole world of feeling of these developing new human beings, including the "new eroticism," if one may call it that, is the field of socialist art. The lyric form is not in

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conflict with socialist realism, because it is not an anti-realistic lyric which seeks the metaphysical world beyond our own, but the poetic representation of the ideological movement of the developing socialist human beings. *Socialist realism is not anti-lyrical.*

And here a related problem may be put: Socialist realism is not anti-lyrical, but it is anti-individualist. This does not mean that it gives no play to personality and does not permit it to develop. Socialism means the real flowering of personality, the enrichment of its content, and the intensification of its consciousness as a personality. However, the development of individuality which is furthered here is not the development of individualism, or, in other words, the development of that which separates man from man. On the contrary, the feeling of collective interdependence which is one of the characteristics of socialism and the effort to give it a poetic form will undoubtedly express itself in stylistic peculiarities in socialist realism. *Socialist realism is therefore anti-individualist.*

This type of poetic work which reflects the epoch in its most general and universal form by embodying it in its own concrete and abstract representations, representations which are both as universal and as concrete as possible does contradict the old realism in the usual sense of the word. This is also the case, for instance, with Goethe's *"Faust."* In form it is certainly not the representation of a concrete historical process, but rather of the struggles of the human spirit. At the same time, however, *Faust* is a philosophic-poetic conception of the developing bourgeois epoch. In my opinion a work like *Faust* with a different content, and in consequence also a different form, but maintaining the greatest possible degree of universality, would undoubtedly belong to the category of socialist realism which represents the most monumental form of the poetic creation of socialism.

These are the chief characteristics of socialist realism in its fundamental principles. From this we draw the conclusion that socialist realism is the method of poetic creation and the style of socialist poetry to represent the real world and the world of human feelings—a style which differs from that of bourgeois realism, both in the content of the subject poetically treated and also in the special peculiarities of the style.

We have seen that the development of our poetry pre-supposes a tremendous increase in our poetic culture in general. It must be admitted quite frankly that occasionally, and particularly with those who are ideologically nearest to us, our poetry is primitive. However, it is just the richness of the associations and feelings, of thoughts and ideas which are conjured up by a work, which is a sign of its importance. When we compare the work of many of our poets with the work of Verhaeren, we observe how many ideas, even philosophic ideas, are present in his work, how many problems, comparisons, and pictures, and how much culture his work

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possesses. In our country a rhymed slogan is very often taken as poetry. One can appeal to Mayakovski here, but the stamp of time has set its mark upon him also, for our life has become far more complicated and we must advance with it. Culture, culture and again culture! It is high time to make an end of the Bohemianism and slothfulness in our midst. It is time to remember that really great masters of their art, even men like our own genius, Puschkin, "light-hearted and careless,' were hard workers and knew much, that they stood at the pinnacle of contemporary culture. It would be foolish to demand that all poets should be academic philosophers and critics. It is not by accident that one man becomes a philosopher and another a poet. However, this does not mean that we need abandon our demand for an advance along the whole line of the general culture of our poets and of their poetic culture. We must not remain stationary at our present level. Those who are anxious to create in fact *"a Magnitostroi of literature,"* those who are equipped with a comprehending attitude towards art, must do everything possible to make themselves the possessors of all the treasures of world culture.

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THE GREAT ALLIANCE

Johannes R. Becher

FASCISM DESTROYS AND LAYS WASTE, falsifies and corrupts all that the best minds of the past, the boldest thinkers, the greatest masters of literature and art have left as a legacy to the revolutionary class of our time. The fear of the proletarian revolution is the deepest root from which the fascist despotism springs, and on which the reigns of terror and the mystic ideologies of Fascism feed. It is as if before mankind says a last good bye to its past, to its pre-history, there were to be heaped up against it in concentrated form all the forces of persecution, all the crimes, all the inhuman spite and infernal horrors.

A red-glowing hatred of Fascism, that enemy of mankind, binds us together with proletarians the world over. This pure, loyal, fruitful hatred unites us with all those who love the truth. This hatred and this love shall animate our literary labors, shall make our message stronger, our art purer and more powerful. Our literary task is the service of truth; we are called upon to unveil the visage of *the great revolutionary truth,* to give tangible, living, rational form to the truth that lies behind the Soviets.

But under Fascism how could there be an earnest, meaningful art and literature, when realistic thinking, truthful thinking, is under a ban?

Ernest Jünger, who on the formal side of artistic expression is without doubt one of the most significant of the fascist literati, has written any number of books, all of which serve, in a "heroic-romantic" manner, to dignify world-war; and all are at the same time written as a preparation for the bourgeoisie's war upon the working class. Out of the odor of the death-strewn fields of the last war, he distills a "heroism" for those "political soldiers" who, upon the backs of an enslaved working class, are out to set up the new fascist state. And who are the heroes whom the fascistic Ernst Jünger holds up as the leaders and rulers of the nation? Noble-born officers and technically trained sons of the upper bourgeoisie, in either case, officers of the sort who, according to Jünger, speak of war, destruction and murder in the same coldly sneering, blasé manner in which the young nobles of the eighteenth century spoke of love and sport. There you have the class-profile of the heroes of fascist literature!

Permit me to call your attention to yet another characteristic circumstance. Fascist art, literature and ideology is full of an at times evident,

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at other times dim and confused feeling of hopelessness, pessimism, and "tragedy!" It is to be noted how the poet, Gottfried Benn, a skeptic and a nihilist, has evolved into a cynically open apologist of fascistic murder and terror. His poems, filled with an hysterical adulation of a naked and bestial violence, in the name of a "mystic force of destiny," are one long threnody on the inevitable passing of the old bourgeois world of classes:

This then the bidding: silence and power,
Knowing that it is crumbling all.
Hold fast the sword against time's hour,
When all the swords shall fall.

However wild and barbaric they may be in their unbridled raptures over the might of war, of death and destruction, and the "suggestive power" of their systematized falsehoods, as expressed in their art-works, they themselves are aware that Fascism has the historic character of a last despairing struggle; since, to quote Dwinger, "on the eastern frontier, the great Freedom alluringly beckons." If Germany, the Germany of the coal kings, the steel magnates, the Junkers and the hyenas of the stock-exchange, does not succeed in saving us from Bolshevism, then "will Vesuvius bury us all with its lava," then "shall we soldiers die like Sampson, pulling down with us the pillars of the western world."

Of such stuff is the false heroism of the fascist literature made, a false pathos noisily compounded of mystical ideas and a hatred of reason. Karl Marx once described the old Romantic, Chateaubriand, apologist of the feudal Restorationists, in the following manner: "Romantically masquerading and strutting about in a gaudy new rhetoric, a false profundity, a Byzantine excessiveness, an emotional coquetry, theatricality, a posturing sublimity—in a word, as great a hodge-podge of falsity as was ever seen, in form and in content." Yet these sentences seem almost colorless, when it comes to describing the literary form and content of *the fascist romanticism of today*. The hatred of the feudal counter-revolutionaries of 1820-1830 for the "Jacobines" and for the "subversive tendencies" of the revolutionary petit-bourgeois democracy was not so fierce, so brutal, so "atavistic" as is the hatred of the Fascists for the proletarian revolution, for the teachings of Marx-Leninism, for all the forces and ideas which are inimical to Fascism. For the gigantic struggles of our era are of infinitely greater import for the future of humanity than the periods of bourgeois revolution formerly were.

To such an epoch as ours the prophecy of Marx is applicable:

> "In times when the class struggle is nearing a decisive point, the process of dissolution within the whole of the old society takes on so intense and glaring a character that a small fraction of the master class renounces that class and joins the revolutionary class,

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which is the one that holds the future in its hands."

With the whole of bourgeois society and bourgeois culture in the grip of the great historical crisis, the literature and art based upon a bourgeois realism could not fail to undergo a crisis of their own. The number of their accredited representatives is dropping off. Many, it is true, sink into a mystical skepticism or nihilism that is without a future, with no way out, without belief in mankind or interest for the concerns of working humanity. But the best among the representatives of this variety of literary realism, which turns in retrospect to the ideas of the great French Revolution and the classical Renaissance,—the best of them, striving each in his own way and with the means at his disposal to look our epoch in the face, are today no longer able to cling, calmly and untormented by doubts, to the old truths, now become untruths, of bourgeois culture. Those among them, like Heinrich Mann and Lion Feuchtwanger, who abhor Fascism as they do the plague, have been brought by the very liveliness of the contemporary struggle to a point where they begin to have a presentiment of and to behold *the true forward-surging forces of our era.* Those who stand for the rights of reason, and for an enlightened and creative view of art, one that is acceptable to their reason, are at the same time those who comprehend, or who are beginning to suspect, that the age of Capitalism is drawing to a close, that new and invincible forces are evolving within the bosom of the old society, forces which have already brought freedom to a portion of the earth and which are constructively at work there, while the old world is sinking ever deeper and deeper, amid shocks, catastrophes, the horrors of war and chaotic entanglements.

Heinrich Mann brings this out in his book, *Der Hass* ("Hate"), filled from cover to cover with a loathing for Fascism: War, which in all likelihood is the "last despairing gesture of a decaying world-capitalism," will be logically directed at the Soviet Union, and "a rearmed Germany will be sent against Soviet Russia." But, continues Mann, "In all human judgment, the system (of the National Socialist state) will be overthrown; a revolution is not to be won whose ideas are lopped off by reality itself, with all the reasonableness on the other side."

This is a statement which reveals a *deep insight* into the basic forces of our era. In the face of the horrors which National Socialism has heaped upon Germany, Heinrich Mann has exchanged the novelist's pen for that of the political combatant. With many a bold, clear word, he has made it plain that Hitler's dictatorship is a growth within the very entrails of the bourgeois republic. He has shown the quality of reality inherent in Communism as the trail-blazer through the Hitlerian humbuggery. These are words that weigh heavily in the scale, words of reason, insight, a deep sincerity. But the same Heinrich Mann has also uttered many a word against Communism, he has become enmeshed in many a contradiction,

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he has given credence to the trick phrases of the Social Democracy,—phrases out of the "revolutionary democracy," such as "a dictatorship for the purpose of restoring democracy." We would not conceal the fact from Heinrich Mann that we have our doubts as to certain of his ideas and pronouncements. *But we are mindful of and esteem the valiant anti-fascist fighter,* the one who, in his greetings to this Congress, has informed us that "the emigré literature, which takes in certain writers still left in Germany, is on the way to becoming better, where before it was but the profile of a literature"; he it is, too, who has pointed to the anti-fascist German literature as the "intellectual anticipation" of the Germany to be. In the name of this Germany to be, in which a true workers' democracy, a democracy of the Soviets, shall rule, *we hereby call for an alliance of all those endowed with a loyal hatred of Fascism and cultural barbarism.*

In his latest anti-fascist novel, *Die Geschwister Oppenheim* ("The Oppenheims"), and in his earlier book, *Die Erfolg* ("Success"), Lion Feuchtwanger has given evidence of that reason-directed passion with which he is ready to espouse *the cause of the truth.* He has pointed out how the German Fascists have "shattered all the standards of civilization, and have trodden under the foot of the hangman's helper all the ideas of freedom, reason, humanity and human dignity which have become current since the French Revolution." Feuchtwanger raises the question as to whether the Third Reich can come to an end in any other way than through the force of revolution. In a literary form brimming with a love of freedom, irony and a death-dealing hate, the same writer has contributed to the unmasking of the German counter-revolution and the National Socialist movement. Yet, in his lack of acquaintance with the German worker, he has had more than one skeptical word for the Communist movement; and when he for the first time takes upon himself the task of describing the heroic underground struggle of the German Communists, he falls into a romantic distortion and a mode of exposition that is utterly out of keeping with his clearly reasoned point of view. The unconvincing construction in such passages shows plainly in a slackening of the artist's command over his form, as if the material were recalcitrant about following the creator's whim.

In his greetings to this Congress, Heinrich Mann further informs us that the anti-Fascist writers are "in the majority thinking socialistically," the chief thing being "that they at any rate are in a mood to think." We are convinced that this will to comprehend the happenings of our day, this loyal will to know and serve the truth, is bound to bring such writers as Heinrich Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger and many other haters of Fascism nearer to the working class. We await their assistance, their clearly manifested readiness to enter the arena and to cast the weight of their word into the struggle against war and Fascism.

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To these "realistic writers"—and their number is many—the ideas of Humanism and Civilization are dear. But is this Humanism, *in its older form,* adapted still to the true furthering of the cause of human progress? Has not this Humanism, rather, by passing over to the camp of the embattled workers, undergone a change in form and content, and is not the Humanism of our fighting proletariat the richer of the two and the bigger with hope for the future? Is the bourgeois order and form of civilization after all identical with civilization in general?

Friedrich Engels, confronted by the decline of all broad theoretical interests among the so-called cultured classes of Germany, remarked that the German workers were the sole *heirs* to those deep scientific and philosophic preoccupations which in the classic period had laid the foundations of Germany's renown. Today, the capitalistic profit-motive has brought things to such a pass that the official rulers and rapers of the Geramn nation are to be seen debasing all that once, a hundred years ago, was the pride of the German middle classes, and which only a short while back, vulgarized and trivially distorted by academic convention, was still held in some respect. At the present time, the fascist ideologians, who barbarically make war upon all international thought, have yet the audacity to claim as their own Goethe, the cosmopolitan, explaining in a manner Dr. Faust as a forerunner of Dr. Goebbels, when they do not, as some of them do, attempt to explain away the Goethean cosmopolitanism as a dereliction and a weakness on Goethe's part, seeking by a trick of lying legedermain to make the poet out to have been a blustering nationalist. The same fascist ideologians have further dared to lay hands upon the great Friedrich Hölderein, dead and silent these hundred years now, who hymned the national revolutionary struggle for freedom, who was the deeply wrathful critic of German conditions and the herald of a greater and purer social world to be; with bombastic phrases, they would lyingly transform him into a prophet of the battlefield of Langemarck, of commercial massacre for the benefit of the cannon kings and the colonial robbers. They who have burned and banned the works of Heinrich Heine, along with those of Marx and Engels, are engaged in polluting by word and deed the works of the classic poets and philosophers of Germany, either by obscenely reviling them, or, with a hypocritical roll of the eyes and a wry mouth the while, by sniping and distorting them to fit the needs of their *"myth of blood and honor," which conceals nothing other than the bestial grimace of the profit-hunter.* Such is the end of the road for the bourgeois class: a Fascism demolishing and besmirching everything, everywhere it goes—and bolting the door on Germany's past; *henceforward the fate of classic German culture, of the classic thought and poetry, all the heritage of the past, is to be given over finally into those hands in which the future lies, those of the German working class.* They alone, as they stand in a heroic

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struggle for liberation,—standing thereby for Germany's future as a whole, —they alone are capable of taking this cultural legacy which they cherish, of investigating it, making it over, critically clarifying it, rendering it serviceable to their *new* and broader class-aims, and building it up into the edifice of that *socialistic culture of the future,* for which today they are so tenaciously fighting and, when needs be, dying. Wherefore, comrades, it obviously behooves every revolutionary, every freedom-loving writer to turn a deeply respectful gaze upon the Communist Party of Germany, and to join the struggle for the liberation of its leader, our beloved Ernst Thaelmann.

All the signs of the times indicate that those writers whose serious concern is with cosmopolitanism, reason, and freedom should enter into an alliance with the working class. To him who holds dear the great names and works of the past,—*Goethe, Hegel, Lessing, Hölderlin, Schiller, Büchner, Heine,* and all those who have been the forerunners and furtherers in the work of building up a classical culture, from Renaissance times down to the last hundred years,—to the one who cherishes such works and names, and who would rescue and purify the heritage from the fascist smirch, to such a one it will be evident that the victorious outcome of the working class revolution is the sole guarantee for the restoration and continued development of the best in the cultural inheritance of the centuries.

In an era such as ours, the responsibility and obligation of the writer toward the great mass of the workers is a heavier, more challenging one, than ever. Never was there a truly great art which was not anchored and rooted in those decisive social forces and movements that stood as milestones pointing to the future. What is bound to fall must be given a push. The bourgeois social order, dependent upon capitalistic exploitation, is doomed to fall at last. All the forces and thinking of an upward-tending progress are in league *against* the bourgeoisie; all the classic works of the past speak out *against* it; the future, and with it the cause of culture in general, is *against* the bourgeoisie; for that future, with its universal human interests, is to be identified with the struggle of the working class. The present, the past and the future imperiously demand of us the establishment of the *great battle-alliance, the united front against Fascism and imperialistic war.*

In his *Rouge et Noir,* Stendhal has his hero, in the course of a soliloquy, let fall a sentence which hurls a proud and open defiance at the ruling class and its baseness; it is a beautiful, bold, clear-ringing, revolutionary utterance:

"Tread confidently! I have more spirit than these hirelings. I wear the uniform of my century."

(*From the German by Samuel Putnam*)

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SUBWAY

The dark brain's rumor of eternity
lost, and the hope, and the heaven, and the way.

Regard this man in the chill of the subway train:
he sees the bridge and the water like sweet wine;
cold faces across him, brothers, too much bowed
by rules to speak, to breathe. Only the collar said:
"Dignity must be kept as clean, as white, as stiff . . ."
Gentility still lingers on his cuff;
where protest drowned, a frightened look appears;
the bosses drove him hungry from their lairs.
Against the wall, he broods the abyss, the fall
to nothingness—so give him bread, the will
like palsy; yet no trembling hand extends
for pennies dropping from unwilling hands.
And live and live, o subway man, like this?
what question stirs behind that ashy face?

anyway, anyhow live . . .

Who is that man so frigid at your side?
the neck was slit with a tempered razor-blade;
the black woman sang "tomorrow the sun will shine"
in a cracked voice and "singing in the rain";
the veteran, blind, led by a faithful dog
is grateful for the license—he may beg;
the chewing gum is Wrigley's, and the cash
went sliding down Park Avenue in the crash.

The subway eyes unmoved stare straight ahead;
prosperity 'round the corner, but he lied.
Cold river-end, the washing tides, the train
emerges, leaps the anguished span.
And these men, flesh and blood like him, endure
same hunger, cold, same butchery in war;
dimly he knows, these are his comrades; there are
behind these stolid suits, hearts aware.

ROBERT HALPERIN

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THE SPECTRE

Peter Quince

I WOULDN'T HAVE BOTHERED if I hadn't found a slug. As it was I dropped it into the slot and propped myself up against the phone. It took me some time to make it clear to the information clerk at the dairy that I wanted someone who knew something about stock. Cows. At length she connected me with an employee who trucked milk into the city from Palo Alto.

I mentioned the breed of the cow, its weight, the amount of milk it offered daily and asked how much it was worth on the market. He named what he considered an approximate figure. I was about to hang up, then asked, as an afterthought, if he had any idea what a child seven years of age, weighing sixty-one pounds, would bring. The child, I explained gravely, was not a milk-giver. The man sputtered and hung up. I couldn't blame him. He must have thought I was mad. But really, I'm not. You see, he had never heard of Wheatpatch, or of Laurie of the sprained leg. He could not know that the stock I was interested in included Annie, an ailing milk-cow, and the blue-eyed, golden-haired Naomi, who died that Annie might live.

Wheatpatch lies in that sparsely settled cotton country at the edge of California's San Joaquin Valley. Wheatpatch is not a town; it is the crossing of two dusty roads. And last week I had never heard of it, and now I think I shall never forget it.

I am a member of the Young Communist League of San Francisco. Last week I was sent to an important section meeting taking place in Los Angeles to represent our District Bureau. As there were no funds available for traveling expenses I was given a dollar and told to take the freights. I never did get to the meeting. I was thrown off a "gondola" somewhere south of Bakersfield. I hit the highway.

It was an empty, treeless, desolate country that stretched about me. The cotton stubble was burned in the fields by a searing sun. I walked, too hot and disgusted even to swear. I paused before a weather-stained wooden sign which indicated that Wheatpatch lay somewhere ahead. At length, turning a curve, I sighted a lone tree bordering the road far in the distance. Set back from the road were two dilapidated structures. It was difficult to decide which might be the barn. My eyes returned to the tree.

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Something stirred under it. It was a boy who sat up on my approach, tucking a finger into the book he'd been reading to keep his place.

"Hullo," I said. "How far is it to Wheatpatch?"

"This is Wheatpatch. Clump of wild wheat usta grow offa that corner." He indicated the crossing of two dusty roads. "Where are you going?"

"Damn!" I said, sitting down on the grass under the tree. "I thought it was a town. How far's it to the highway."

"Ten miles." He kept glancing at my bruised cheek. "Been in a fight?"

"Kicked off of a freight," I explained. "Souvenir from a bull."

"I hate cops!" he said. I looked at him curiously. He was sixteen, of a sturdy built, with blue eyes and thick, straw-colored hair. His face was wide, and the nose and lips sensitive.

"Why?" I asked.

He sat up abruptly, wincing. "Got a sprained leg," he explained. He nursed it for a moment.

"They don't bother you out here, do they?"

"They're gonna forclose on us," he retorted sharply.

"You mean——."

"Yeh. The farm. It took us eight years to build it up. It used to be a good farm, too, until the power company busted us. We sided with the workers against the big ranches. That was in the cotton strike."

"Sure," I said. "I heard about it." As a matter of fact I had been sent, not many months ago, down to Tulare, the heart of the cotton region to collect material for a pamphlet on the activities of the youth in that strike struggle. "But I don't understand," I continued. "I thought the workers won the strike."

"They did. So did some of the small farmers. But the small farmers union busted up. And since then the power company's closing down on us. They won't rent us any water."

"Well," I asked, "can't the union be reorganized?"

"I guess so," he said. "But it ain't, and if we don't make a crop this season——."

I reverted to the cops, not knowing what else to say. "What about them?" I asked.

"Didn't the company use 'em to separate us? Isn't the bank using the sheriff now to take away the farm? And didn't they kill Johnny?"

"At Arvin?"

He nodded his head. "He was the union organizer. My brother." We were silent for a while. "This is his book," he said suddenly. "I've been trying to read it." I tried not to show surprise.

"How do you like it?"

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"There's some things I don't understand, but, gee, I like the sound of it."

"What do your folks think?"

His face sobered and became wistful. "They're just not interested, I guess," he said slowly. "Y'see, Dad and Mom work so damn hard, and with everything going to pieces——. They're tired all the time, like animals, almost. Naomi's sick, has been for four or five days, and Jenny——. Naomi's my little sister," he broke off to explain. "Jenny's our milk cow. She's sick too. The rest of the kids are too small to take much interest." He brooded silently. "Gee, I wish Dad was like he was during the strike. His eyes are different now, like he was always just getting up or going to sleep."

I took the booklet gently from his unresisting hands. "What is it you don't understand?" I asked. And so, as the sun dropped over us, the boy and I, our heads together, pored slowly over a book written over a hundred years ago, called the Communist Manifesto. We read and talked for about an hour when a tired-looking woman came out of what I later learned was the barn and headed up the road in the direction from which I had come.

"Mom" he yelled, "where you going?"

"After Doc Luffner," she flung back over her shoulder, never pausing.

"For Naomi?" I asked.

"No, for Jenny. Doc Luffner is the vet. She must be doing worse."

"What about Naomi?"

"Not so good, she ain't. Florie's with her. Florie's next oldest to me." He stirred uneasily. "I guess maybe I'd better go see if I can help Dad." He rose to his feet.

"Well, I guess I gotta get going," I said.

"So-long," he said.

"So-long," I said.

I got a little ways down the road when he yelled: "What's your name?"

"Dan, what's yours?"

"Laurie."

"So-long, Laurie."

"So-long, Dan." He hobbled away and disappeared into the barn. I went slowly down the road, puffing at a rolled cigarette. The sun had set; the air was still murky with heat. And I was no longer in a hurry to get to the highway. Dusk gathered and deepened but with it came no stir of wind. It was, I think, what the farmers in the middle-west call tornado weather. I walked, rested on a fallen tree trunk for about fifteen minutes, then was up again, rolling a cigarette. Someone behind me called. I could not make out what was said and it was already too

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dark for me to see. I waited, idly wondering, never dreaming that it was my name being shouted into the heavy, heat-laden air.

"Dan!" the voice cried. "Dan! Oh. Dan!"

"Who's there? Laurie?"

"Yes. Dan?" It was a question now. I ran back to meet him. I caught him as he fell forward, and seated him in the middle of the road. Tears of pain blurred his eyes. His breath came in convulsive, shuddering gasps.

"For Christ sake, what is it, Laurie?" The kid suddenly became awfully important to me.

"Naomi," he said in a voice he was unable to control.

"Sick?"

He didn't have to nod his head. "You gotta go for a doc."

I looked at his leg. "You came all the way on that?" I remembered the twist of pain every time he moved.

"She can't breathe. You gotta hurry!"

"Sure," I said. I pulled him to the side of the road.

"About a mile down. You can telephone." I stumbled away, feeling for the dark road under me, falling over stones to arise and continue on. Half a mile or so away I made out the light of a house. At last, when a dozen times it seemed I must stop to rest my aching lungs, I climbed the steps and knocked feverishly at the door. In twenty minutes the doc picked me up, and not long afterwards, Laurie. The doc was a reserved person with tight lips and bushy eyebrows. He drove a four-year-old roadster. It was not difficult to gather that often as not his patients paid for services with appreciation as with cash.

"Why didn't your folks call me yesterday?" he asked Laurie.

"They didn't think she was doin' bad."

"How's your leg?" The doc peered over the steering-wheel as he manipulated a curve.

"All right," said Laurie.

"Do you think you can run a mile on a leg just a week out of its cast?"

"I thought it was a sprain," I put in.

"Broken," the doc said shortly. "Why didn't your mother or dad come, Laurie?"

"Dad's with Jenny. Mom went after Doc Luffner."

The doc passed a nervous hand over his eyes, as though trying to rub something gruesome away. "Jenny's the cow," he said. He might have been talking to himself. We drove the rest of the way in silence. Arriving, we jumped out and entered the house. In the kitchen, Laurie took us to the bed. A little girl lay in the center of it, a girl far too small to lie alone in so big a bed. Her face had been washed clean. The golden curls

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clustered about it. There was even a little smile on her face. And she was dead. We knew that, the doc, Laurie and I. And lest Florie should find it out we sent her off to sleep. She departed quietly, with a weary, worried look in her large eyes.

I looked about the wretched room. Overhead the wallpaper was rusty with the in-seeping rain of past years. Dreary, comfortless furniture. The doc seemed unable to tear his eyes away from the dead child's face. At last he turned to Laurie. "Where's your dad," he asked.

Laurie said not a word. He picked up and lit a lantern, then led us to the barn. The doc entered. I followed with Laurie coming behind. In the barn, before its stall, lay the milk-cow, Jenny. The vet was in the act of putting his instrument into a black bag.

"Good thing you called me when you did," the vet said. "She'll be okay in a day or two." The woman caught sight of us standing in the doorway. Her hand went up to strangle the sob that stabbed at her throat.

"Naomi!" she cried.

"Dead," said the doc tersely. Dry, racking sobs shook her body with almost unbelievable intensity. The farmer took the lantern from her hand.

"My baby," she moaned. And over and over again. "My baby." Slowly the farmer set a pail rightside up, straightened a blanket. The very pettiness of his actions drove the words from my lips in a raging torrent.

"Do you know what the doctor said?" I demanded. "That if he'd been called half an hour earlier he'd have saved her. Do you understand that? You stayed with a cow and sent your wife after a veterinary when your little girl lay dying! Why didn't one of you go for the doc instead of Laurie? Did you expect him to be able to hurry on that leg of his?"

The farmer looked at me. He'd never seen me before, yet he asked no questions. He led the way back into house. We followed, through the big room and into the adjoining one. "There are six other kids," he said, "not counting——Naomi. They got to be fed. There's no irrigation and only one cow. We sell the milk," he added and slowly went back into the barn.

Laurie sat at the foot of the bed. His brother's book lay beside him. I went outside. There was nothing to say, nothing. Or so I thought until, on the way to the road, I passed the open kitchen window. Now Laurie should have been crying. This is not unreasonable. When a kid sister dies a fellow doesn't read. He cries. But Laurie wasn't crying. He was reading. The smile was still on Naomi's face and she seemed to listen as Laurie said, from his brother's book:

"A spectre is haunting Europe and California and Wheatpatch, the spectre of Communism."

He had misquoted Marx but I could find nothing wrong with it.

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TWO CITIES

The cold hangs on along North River,
A little late for January thaw
And a little early for spring.

Old Foot feels tired.
. . . Well,
You too would be
If you had walked as many useless miles
As he.

Old Foot leans back.
The city sounds
Remotely tax the ear
As though somewhere not very far
Nor very near,
People got up in the gray of morning,
Went to work,
Drew pay checks
And came home before dark,
As though somewhere
There throbbed a breath
Affirming life,
Negating death.

The cold hangs on along North River,
But there are those who have warm coats
And there are those who do not shiver.
Here, U. S. A., is my report:
There is Lank Davis, going west,
His suitcase packed,
His coat and vest
Buttoned against the cold,
His hat
Slung debonair across his face;
And Chico, lonely, dreams upon
Brazil, the Argentine,
A place

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A thousand miles away,
As though a world awaited him,
Peru or Paraguay.

Dutch Eddy mumbles
Through old wrinkled lips
Of faded latitudes,
Forgotten trips
Lost in the tattered crumbled sails
Of clipper ships.

The cold hangs on along North River.
From Hobo City no smoke rises.
Life is compact, with no surprises.
Teddy, from somewhere south,
From Carolina,
From Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee,
Likes this New York;
An ocean liner
Holds fast against the pier;
This life is free
For those who make it free;
The Chop House Grill
Is where some guy with money
Has his fill.

The Cold hangs on along North River.
Radio City is not far away
For those who want to go there,
Those who say
Such things belong not to the Rockefellers
But to ourselves, to us, to you, to me,
Maybe ten years from now,
Maybe today.

PHILIP CORNWALL

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ANDRE GIDE AND COMMUNISM

Samuel Putnam

ANDRE GIDE IS ONE OF THE TWO OUTSTANDING masters of the after-War generation in France, the other being Proust; and the influence of either has reached far beyond the national frontiers. While other "precursors" might be found, such as Valéry or Apollinaire, their impingement has not had the range or depth of that effected by the author of *Les Nourritures terrestres* and the creator of Swann. Whatever one may think of their work, it is Gide and Proust who remain the fountain-heads responsible for the two main streams. The Proustian influence may be the more widely diffused abroad; but owing to a certain revolt against psychologizing, a certain surge toward sensation, the Gidean has been, probably, the dominant one at home—it is very, very French in essence. It is, accordingly, hard to estimate just how great an effect Gide's "conversion" to Communism, which has occasioned so much wordy discussion, may have upon those who have looked up to him as to a revered master. If we endeavor to find out what it was caused Gide to go Leftward, and the relation of the evolution in his view of society to the influence he has exerted as a literary leader, the effort may serve to shed a light upon the possible effectiveness of his example.

It seems to me, it should not be difficult to trace the course of Gide's evolution. It is all there for the one who will read him closely. It seems to me, too, that the *cas Gide,* as the French would call it, is a prophetically typical one, and that we are likely to see more and more of the same general kind as the barricades draw nearer.

Upon reading either Gide or Proust, one is easily deceived, in an inverse fashion, until he looks beneath the surface. Upon the surface, for example, Proust appears to be all sensation, to be primarily concerned with *sensibilitè,* sensitivity. We discover, however, that it is the Proustian intelligence which remains the motivating force in the end; the author is constantly seeking to understand that which he feels; one might say that he feels in order that he may understand. "With Gide, on the contrary"—I am quoting here from the Introduction which I wrote to *The European Caravan,* in 1930—"it is the play of the intelligence over the

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surface which creates the first impression . . . but upon close inspection, we find that if the author is interested in ideas, he is concerned with them in so far as they reflect the sensitive apparatus of man; it is the movements of the *moi* that hold him fascinated. . . . Proust is looking always at life, Gide at the human soul within. The former proceeds, or likes to proceed, from the particular sensation to the intellectual and universal law. Proust is an observer, whose characters seek reality within themselves, whereas Gide is attracted by the gesture, and from the gesture goes inward and downward. . . . Gide probably comes the closer to life, for the reason that his tendency is affective, while the Proust tendency may be taken as standing for art and order in the expressive formulation of the real."

The formula which each gives us for his art is indicative. Proust's is: *"L'art recompose exactement la vie"* (art exactly reproduces life). Gide's: *"Le génie du roman fait vivre le possible, non pas le réel"* (the function of the novel is to make the possible, not the real, come alive). In other words: to reconstruct with exactitude the panorama of life, through a *rechehche du temps perdu;* or, to make the possible live, which is Gide's attempt in such works as *Les Faux-monnayeurs* and *Les Caves du Vatican.*

Gide's approach to art and life, then, as over against Proust's basically intellectualistic attitude, is *affective,* or emotional. And it is undoubtedly Gide's affections, rather than his intellect, which have brought him to Communism. His "conversion" (a word which I, with him, would curse) has been due to his sensitivity. Upon reading the recent letter of Ramon Fernandez to Gide, one feels that the humanist critic is aware of this, as how could he help being? Fernandez rightly considers himself the better Marxist scholar of the two. Indeed, he previously had expressed a doubt as to whether Gide understood Marx at all, and was irritated by the amateur's rushing in where a specialist feared to tread. But M. Fernandez himself, as his letter shows, has learned something outside the philosophy texts since the shameful Sixth of February last, in the face of a rising Fascistic tide in France.

With Gide, as has been said, the gesture is the thing. And for "gesture," we might almost substitute "action," comparing the while that "humanism of action" of which Fernandez has spoken, action being regarded as a means of knowing, a mode of knowing, oneself and the world (reality), either from the point of view of humanism, which is Fernandez', or from that of the human sensitivity, which is Gide's. Gide in the past has been regarded as an apostle of the *"acte gratuit."* Now, the *acte*

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grotuit is a thing that is exclusively French, one which, in its fine nuance, it is all but impossible for the non-Frenchman to comprehend. As good an example as could be found is the act of Lafcadio, in *Les Caves du Vatican,* in pushing an unoffending fellow passenger out of the carriage of a moving railway train, by way, putting it crudely, of making sure that he is capable of acting, and hence, sure that he is alive. To the foreign ear, this may sound downright silly, if not quite mad; but as one who has known many members of the *après-guerre* generation in France, I can give the assurance that it represents—I should say, has represented,—a very real problem. *Les Caves du Vatican* was published in 1913, the year before the War, but it would be hard to find a book that is more after-War in spirit.

A paralysis of the will, of the will to act, is one of the most characteristic stigmata of the generation from 1919 to 1929, not alone in France, but elsewhere—in Germany, Remarque and others—and can we say that Americans were wholly unaffected by it?—read what Mr. Cowley and Gertrude Stein have to say about the "lost generation"! Look over the Dadaists, the Surrealists, down to Jacques Rigaut's punctuating revolver bullet, which in 1929 rung down the curtain on the theretofore too talky melodrama of disillusioned youth. Almost the sole literary representative today of this after-War defeatism is Drieu La Rochelle, who, with his muddled ideology of a mystic "courage," his inability or pretended inability to distinguish clearly between Communism and Fascism, is obviously headed for the latter, the fascist camp.

At present, there is a new, revived passion for action,—for action as a way out. The old Escapisms are dead, from a "body literature" of the *Corps et moi* type to M. Valéry's "game" or "solemn procession of the intellect." Even Gide's own escape, the homeopathic treatment of a bad case of sensitivity with—sensitivity—will, as its creator has found, no longer work to his own satisfaction. The only way out is the proletarian collectivistic one, with that action which its attainment implies.

As to how Gide came to be a Communist, there are as many opinions as there are critics. Ehrenbourg stresses the Congo trip of some years back; and there can be little doubt that what Gide saw in Africa, the terrible, the horrible workings of French colonial imperialism, had its effect, started him off. Gide himself will hear of no talk of "conversion," insisting that he has not changed direction, but has gone always "straight ahead."

"The great difference is that for long I saw nothing ahead of me but empty space and the projection of my own fervor. Now, I am going forward toward something. I know that somewhere my vague desires are

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taking form, and that my dream is about to become reality. . . . It is simply that my being reaches out toward a longed for goal. All my thoughts, involuntarily even, come back to it. And if my life were necessary for the success of the U.S.S.R. I should give it readily—as so many others have done and will do.—I set this down with a cool head and in all sincerity, for the reason that I very much feel the need of leaving at least this statement, in case death should come before it is possible for me to declare myself more fully."

Whatever may be said, it is the emotional short cut to Communism which Gide has taken. As he puts it in the *Perséphone,* he has gone "where not so much the law as love doth lead me." The symbol of the narcissus flower, running throughout the poem, is a highly personal one.

He who bends above its cup,
He who breathes in its odor,
Beholds the unfamiliar world of hell.

It is "love's too brimming day" which leads to the nether-world vision (the nether world may here be taken as the historically submerged world of the proletariat), a vision from which the Nymphs, representing the principle of a blithe dalliance with the pristine material pleasures of life, would restrain Perséphone, daughter of Demeter, the earth's fruitfulness, and incarnation here of Beauty, or the aesthetic principle. What is it Perséphone beholds, as she bends over the narcissus?

I behold wandering
A people without hope,
A people all,
Sad, restless, drab.
. . . . . .
A people poor and grieving, all,
Who know not hope,
For whom no springtime laughs.

Gide's own case is summed up in the lines:

Thy compassion already allies thee
To Pluto, King of Hell.

With these verses, it is instructive to compare something else which Gide has written since becoming a Communist:

"They arouse my indignation, those who say, 'Oh, workingmen and peasants, the common people, they are not worth bothering about'. And

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they will go on to assure me that, if I knew workingmen and peasants better, I would be of the same opinion. I do not believe them. For:

"As for that working class, suffering and oppressed, upon which you have founded your own well-being,—not to realise that it is you who have made it what it is, that is the thing which to me is so monstrous. You have stupefied, debased and defiled the members of it; and yet, you have the audacity to say, Look how unclean they are!—Only give them the means to get the filth off, to lift their heads, to get a little instruction and to take their place in the sun, and we shall see as to that. What it is possible for them to become,—that is the thing that matters. And that is what strikes fear in you. For you know very well that their 'inferiority' is an imposed one. Their backs are bent now—you keep them bent; but only let them draw themselves erect (although that is not ever to be expected of YOU*), and then, and only then, you shall see what it is they have in them."*

Persephone has looked into the Narcissus' cup, has beheld that "unfamiliar world," and she says:

How could I, after this,
Laugh and sing with you, care-free,
Now that I have beheld, now that I know
A suffering people's longings, how they wait?
O grieving populace of shades, ye draw me.
To you, I go. . . .

The plight of the proletaire, as Gide sees it, is not inaptly symbolized by the Danaïdes, those daughters of Danaus condemned forever to draw water in perforated urns. For—

Here nothing ends,
But each relentlessly
Pursues, pursues and bends
For things that slip and flee.

Yet, they are "not unhappy"; that is the tragic part:

Hateless and loveless, without pain or desire,
We know no other fate
Than to begin again, uncompensate,
Life's senseless mimicry.

Persephone is warned that she is there "not to take pity," but to rule:

Hope not that thou canst be of help.

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None, not God himself, shall elude his Fate.

. . . . . .

And that thous mayest forget thy compassion,
Drink of Lethe's cup,
Hell's offering to thee, with all earth's treasure.

The doctrine, and the remedy, is too familiar for commentary.

It is the pomegranate, that "memento of the light," representing "pleasure's forgotten hue," which gives back "the lost earth's taste"—the taste of that earth which, with all its earthy joys, belongs of right to him who works it. Persephone may turn to the narcissus once more; but what is the vision it gives her now? "Winter."—"None but dead objects . . . a regret for laughing seasons gone." . . .

From everything, a long, slow moaning flows,
A world hopes vainly for the return of spring.

Demeter, the Earth-Mother, goes groping blindly through a bramble-strewn world in search of her lost daughter, who "dwells in Hell." The Chorus may be despairing; but Eumolpus, the Singer, he who spreads the Earth-Mother's rites,—Eumolpus is reproving:

Ye poor despairing shades,
Neither can winter everlasting be.

This is the answer to all proletarian defeatism.

Triptolemus then is born, Demophoön, "light of the people." His is, significantly, a "cradle of flames and embers." He is a sturdy infant, he, the newborn (newborn in consciousness) Worker.
It is he who is to teach to mortals "labor's lesson" and cause the earth to reblossom. Thanks to him, Persephone is to "live and see the day" and "escape from this dark pit." She is to be no longer "Queen of Hell," but of "the earthly springtime:" The gates of death are forced, and she looks forward to a mating with her "earthly spouse," the "radiant Triptolemus," Triptolemus the Worker. "The gloomy Pluto shall not hold us back." Triptolemus is already snatching the "mantle of woe" from the Earth-Mother.

Persephone, none the less, is "still the dark Pluto's bride," in the sense that she must always escape to go "To that dark world where I know suffering is."

Dost thou think it with impunity that one bends over
Hell's sorrowing pit a heart that is drunk with love?

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These two verses are the Gidean autobiography to date.

I have seen that which is hidden and which flees the day,
And I cannot forget thee, desolating truth.

. . . . . .

For I would go down, step by step and rung by rung,
Descend to the very depths of human sorrow.

. . . . . .

For if the springtime is to be reborn,
The grain must consent to die——

Yes, it is the emotional path which Gide has taken. A great many, with and without a culture approximating his, are doing the same thing today. It is inevitable as the conflagration approaches and the goats rush into the flames. And who shall say that the emotional cut is not as valid and lasting a one as any other at a time like this? For the one who plays with thought, who makes of thought a game, as Gide has done—a play of thought over an emotion, a sensitivity, which constitutes the basic stratum—(Valéry also plays with thought, but not in the same way)—for such a one, the emotion, the sensitivity, is the enduring while thought is the shifting and changeable element. Fernandez was right in suspecting Gide's theoretic (but not his emotional) Marxism.

It is the fuller, potentially fullest life for all promised by proletarian collectivism which has been in Gide's case the luring factor. He, the rampant, Protestant, bourgeois-hating individualist of old now sees in such a society the sole chance to realize his individuality and his personality. In this, the man of sixty-five, one whose place, and a high one, in the world of letters has been made, who has always strenuously insisted that he wrote not for his own generation but for the generations to come,—he, André Gide, now takes his stand with the world's youth—not that false youth which is led on by cloudy mysticisms and an emblem to a machine-made death for money-mad masters; but the real youth, those who realize that the world, as it is, is a manure-heap, and who are bent upon cleaning out the whole filthy mess.

In finding Communism André Gide has found that youth which all his life he has sought.

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* This article is an extract from a more extended study of Gide to be published later. The quotations from the *Persephone* are from a translation of the poem made by the author of the article.

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THE ROAD THESE TIMES MUST TAKE

Yes, why do we all, seeing a communist, feel small? That small
Catspaw ruffles our calm—how comes it? That touch of storm
Brewing, shivers the torches even in this vault? And the shame
Unsettles a high esteem? Here it is. There fall
From him shadows of what he is building bold and tall—
For his sun has barely mastered the misted horizon—they seem.
Indeed he casts a shadow, as among the dead will some
Living one. It is the future walking to meet us all.

Mark him. He is only what we are, mortal. Yet from the night
Of history, where we lie dreaming still, he is wide awake:
Weak, liable to ill luck—yet rock where we are slight
Eddies, and amid us islands the spring tide beginning to made.
Mark him, workers, and all who wish the world aright—
He is what your sons will be, the road these times must take.

C. DAY LEWIS

SPEAKING CONCRETELY:

A REPLY to C. DAY LEWIS

There's a road building that these times will take,
You and I build. But all hell's length to go
If you and I are separable so—
Water from rock. No: Everyman's fingers, we slake
Hot lime with water, to bind rock; we make
Concrete for path, bridge-pier, revetment; grinding
Rubble, stone, sand; with steel inforcement designing
These strengths into solid no black frost can break.

Marx for your map, Lenin theodolite—
This is a thing Smolny's October shewed—
Crag-contour pioneered, valley and peak's height
Known: all is ready? No, steel wire must be
Inseparable from concrete, you from me,
We from the durable millions. Then there's a road!

T. H. WINTRINGHAM

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BOOKS

SIX AUTHORS IN SEARCH OF THEIR FUTURE

Edwin Berry Burgum

Six recent books* may be taken as a cross section of the autumn output of fiction. They have but one quality in common. They deal for the most part with life in the city. Otherwise they differ in method, in attitude, in milieu. And yet all but one of them have been praised by well-known reviewers. De Voto has become a best seller in Boston; Halper has drawn a full page of enthusiasm in the *Herald Tribune* from Sinclair Lewis, and Waldo Frank has been preferred to Proust in Buenos Aires. Obviously the different critics have different standards. And a belated reviewer of the novels finds himself as much interested to examine this diversity of attitudes as to express dogmatically his own conclusions.

From this point of view the novel on the list that has been praised by nobody of importance forms a special case. Bodenheim's *Slow Vision* brings the critic into a realm which he is usually too busy and too supercilious to explore. If it must be classified, it is "pulp" fiction. There is the same fluent slovenly expression, impersonal, standardized, never halted by any concern for the right word. There is the same garrulity of exposition as though the author had written whatever was flowing through his consciousness until stopped by the discovery that part two had grown as long as part one. There is the same predominant concern with sex. But accompanying these very limitations, there is evidence that Bodenheim is trying to escape them. In a cliché, he shows himself aware of the growing class-consciousness of the proletariat. By the time the novel is finished, his hero has begun to wonder if his low wages and frequent loss of jobs are not the fault of the capitalistic system that can be overcome only by organized resistance. And it promises well for Bodenheim's future work that he does not present these glimmerings of new ideas in the mind of his hero in the form of irrelevant propaganda, but tries to show them as part of his day to day experience of life. It goes without saying that he has not succeeded. He has failed partly because the habit of pulp fiction has kept him too much absorbed in sex and 'the woman's point of view,' but in part

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* SLOW VISION, *by Maxwell Bodenheim. Macaulay.* $2.00.
THOSE WHO PERISH, *by Edward Dahlberg. John Day.* $2.00.
WE ACCEPT WITH PLEASURE, *by Bernard De Voto. Little, Brown.* $2.50.
THE FOUNDRY, *by Albert Halper. Viking Press.* $2.50.
CALICO SHOES, *by James T. Farrell. Vanguard Press.* $2.00.
THE DEATH AND BIRTH OF DAVID MARKAND, *by Waldo Frank, Scribners.* $2.75.

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also simply because he has cut his story off too soon. If his hero's turn from taking his work casually and his sex seriously to his taking sex more as a matter of course and his relation to his fellow workmen as a new vital beneficial expansion of his interests: if this turn had gone on further in a third part of the novel, a true development in the action would have been achieved and the novel would not have ended in the mere possibility of a new orientation. But, depite these criticisms, the novel becomes fairly significant to the Marxian critic as a symptom. For undoubtedly in writing it, Bodenheim has moved at one and the same time in the direction not only of a more realistic technique but also of a political attitude that is more proletarian. We may take this two-fold change, I think, as a reflection of the growing self-consciousness of the working class which is demanding more and more freedom from illusion and distraction in its fiction. The pulp magazine must tend to become a truly human interest story and the popular novel at least honest reportage. Bodenheim may well be the prophet of this transformation.

Edward Dahlberg's *Those Who Perish* really belongs in the same category as Bodenheim's novel. In fact both in a political and in an esthetic sense, it is in one respect actually worse, for it ends with an unexpected preposterous burst of deaths and defeatist suicides. But Dahlberg has been one of the very white hopes of proletarian fiction. Without question his *From Flushing to Calvary* showed him more sensitive to its possibilities, more alert to surrender no value of bourgeois sensibility possible of utilization, than almost any other writer who might be named. It is only charitable to assume that he has in this novel become the victim of not recollecting in tranquillity. His very commendable anti-Nazi venom has for the time being cut through all his former hesitations and nuances. It has debased his power of characterization almost into caricature and left him quite incapable of constructing a plot. The one character who is sincerely anti-Nazi commits suicide in despair of winning her fellow Jews to the anti-Nazi cause. The novel is not proletarian, and its exposure of the many types of Jewish personality that are indifferent to the menace of anti-Semitism is so through and so hostile as to lay the book itself open to the charge of anti-Semitism. The many subterfuges invoked by immediate self-interest, the pretense of Zionism concealing the desire for one more German contract, the unctuous belief that one's own prosperity is beyond attack; everything that has made the Jew represent to his enemy rugged individualism at its bourgeois worst, is laid bare with a snarl of irony, sometimes with direct lashes of the pen, but most often in a style whose carelessness is unexpectedly checked by a laborious astigmatic metaphor.

De Voto's *We Accept With Pleasure,* on the contrary, does not pretend to be proletarian. It is written from an even loftier social height than our middle classes. It proceeds from that segment of our bourgeoisie which conceives itself to form an aristocracy. Since it accepts to the full this pretention of Harvard and Beacon Hill, it has cut itself off from the literary aid of satire, and if there is any argument implicit in the novels

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of Gide, of Proust, of Romains, of our best literary people, it is that aristocracy nowadays can't be taken seriously. The attempt becomes a patent hypocrisy. Mr. De Voto's people do not really accept with pleasure the terms of their existence. For the most part they accept them with the New Englander's determination not to lose his temper, which means that on occasion he will do so dreadfully. The consequence is that Mr. De Voto's detail is not analysis but repetition. The simple accumulation of the superficial does not by sheer weight become the profound, but only the boresome. Mr. De Voto has given us to the full this world of survival values that are not recognized as such but have taken on the quality of wish-fulfillment, this world of emotions that are decorous even when they are bohemian and will rarely admit their prejudice and their secret intensity. And, taking them only at their face value, the novel cannot stand the strain. As he repeats in one context after another the same types of polite boredom, of the great renunciation, of amiable chit-chat, the same sort of humor or the same sort of dignity, the same style of conversation, his narrative must grow more and more monotonous save, perhaps, for those who, habituated to this sort of life have lost their perspective, and come to believe the Sacco-Vanzetti case is important to them because they do so much talking about it.

But there is another reason besides this social one for Mr. De Voto's garrulity. His detail is needed to conceal his uncertainty about the theme of his novel. He began it probably under the inspiration of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*. But his attempt to escape the imitation debased the intended theme. There is considerable value implicit in Mrs. Woolf's revealing of the way in which childhood attachments may survive into and govern the relationships of maturity. But the psychological significance of this idea cannot survive its transfer to the temporary superficial attachments of young men in war-time, when the groundwork of personality is already formed and the whole environment abnormal. I cannot help feeling besides, that it is abhorrently superficial to romanticize these as the good old days one longs to see return even if the emphasis is wholly laid on lost personal relationships. But the real theme of the book is the curious unrecognized translation of this intended one. What Mr. De Voto's ancient families of New England long for as they mope about the greenery of their estates or peer from their exclusive clubs into the dreadful foreign reality of the streets, what they crave when they turn to cursing Sacco and Vanzetti, is to put their lives on the only safe foundation. They know that their financial support by the lower classes is not enough. What they crave is the spiritual support of adoration. They miss the scenes from the old novels, the lord smiling down upon his cheering peasants. If they think they 'accept with pleasure,' it is that they know they must make the best of a situation they are unable accurately to recognize. Their pretense of liberalism and of justice is only another groping for their necessary support in public esteem. Neither they nor Mr. De Voto sees the significance of the fact that the minority among them who have some primitive frankness left, the lawyers who are still adding to the family

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fortunes, far from 'accepting with pleasure,' have taken the more direct and desperate course and are legally lynching a poor fish peddler who can scarcely speak English. Mr. De Voto keeps such characters in the background. But they are there nevertheless to show that when his aristocrats become frank and serious, they leave his verbosity behind and act, as far as the historical moment will allow, like any other fascist.

Mr. Halper's failure is less complete, for he has at least written a readable novel. But it has the same source in an unrecognized intention. I do not doubt that he thought he was writing in *The Foundry* a proletarian novel while the very legs of his desire were carrying him into a bourgeois one. At the present time one cannot write a proletarian novel, even though he has Sinclair Lewis' eagle eye for detail, if he has been intoxicated by Mr. Priestly's good nature. What Mr. Halper has written is an interesting bourgeois novel of what went on in a foundry during the bustling days of prosperity. It simply doesn't count that the boss is a tyrant. Not only is his tyranny accepted, but it is compensated for by glimpses into his family life, by his heart disease, by his rare moments of generosity, by the important fact that there are no wage disputes. He is a Victorian figure treated in the Dickensian manner that makes tyranny amusing by emphasizing not its consequences but its grotesque appearance. The foundry is not precisely one happy family, but it is a place where ineffectual grumbling is an accepted practice which leads to nothing more serious than occasional sabotage. The men are wage slaves, and knowing it, they make the best of it by the distraction of love affairs and picnics and by accepting it as the way of the world to which some of their superiors even have to submit. The only dissenting voice is a dour workman of the wobbly persuasion, the most improbable character in the book, who is kept in the background, almost like the villain of Gothic romance. Now all this was once true of American industrial life. But readers will hardly take Mr. Halper's novel in the historical sense when he has not himself frankly taken it as such. Yet if they don't, if it is regarded as a transcription of the present, it becomes a romantic delusion for boss, workmen, and reading public alike. If the critic escapes, it is that the style has already aroused his suspicions.

> "'Zeke!'
>
> "The older man becomes petrified. In a flash he remembers (oh, how he remembers!) that he has forgotten something very important which should not have been forgotten. And what terror can be instilled into that word—Zeke! His legs, alas, are already knocking together."

It is the offensive picaresque of an author who has his eye not on the life about him, but upon a melodramatic 'effect.' Mr. Halper has walked quite through and away from Union Square.

The same comment will not apply to Farrell's *Calico Shoes.* These are short stories that reach in a variety of directions. *Meet the Girls* in the direction of Dorothy Parker's romantic cynicism, *Helen I Love You* of Caldwell's frank reporting of adolescent sensuality, *Twenty-five*

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Bucks of Hemingway's cold acceptance of the world's unscrupulous brutality. And yet one distils from these stories a quality lacking in these other writers; a rich understanding of those who have never known money or education that does not withdraw into cynicism or become demoralized in pathos. Farrell is young and capable of development. He has already three novels to his credit but has never turned out a pot-boiler. Esthetically his direction is towards the tight style of Hemingway, but he escapes belonging to the hard-boiled school because he has already a deeper insight into personality than Hemingway ever had. The finest stories in this collection are not proletarian in any political or class-conscious sense. *The Scarecrow* is a study of a young girl who attempts to compensate for the mistreatment of a mother and her own plainness by promiscuity. And *Just Boys* gives the sensations of a guileless illiterate Negro seduced by a white homosexual. No one except Gertrude Stein in her early days and in a different technique has been able to bring the reader more profoundly within the complex psychology of the bottom dog. To do this at all is to do sympathetically. And this is a more essential preparation for a proletarian novelist than the reading of radical literature. By happy force of circmustances Farrell finds himself at the start in a strategic position.

By contrast Waldo Frank, who has certainly written the best novel on the list, is the victim of circumstance. The paradox for him is that he became a novelist too early and a communist too late. It is the paradox of Gide, who probably for this reason is drawn to Frank's novel. Life forms the cast of a novelist's talent early, when he is peculiarly open to it as experience; it permits him a certain amount of development, new experience running hand in hand with growing comprehension of its meaning. But there comes the time when the esthetic accumulation of past meaning tyrannizes, and either the philosophical or the creative development stops. With Frank neither has yet resulted. But the philosophy, which has come later, and sought to dominate an earlier experience, has been only partially successful. Frank's technique as a novelist, his novelists's attitude toward experience, was forming during the period before the war. It was like Sherwood Anderson's: subjective, escapist, having more than a normal weakness for the mystical, for unanalyzable depths that must be constantly talked about, for peripheral reaches that one was always in Pateresque fashion like some self-blinded octopus vainly grasping for. The radical philosophy that has intruded later has given an edge to this self-examination by forcing it to recognize in detail its relation to the external environment. But unfortunately the only detail that Frank as an artist has been able to realize concretely is that of the America of two or three decades ago, dominated by a confused liberalism and harboring an anarchic unphilosophical radicalism that was equally confused. Waldo Frank describes this old America most vividly, but not with the dominating clarity of interpretation possible to our later moment in history, not with frank and simple recognition of its confusion. Hence the criticism in radical journals that the novel ends upon the wrong note is misleading, since the wrong note

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has been struck all along. The hero, after working in the stockyards and living with a Negro family, returns to his wealth and his respectability, to his wife and her catholicism, fundamentally because there did not yet exist and he has not therefore been able to find in this new environment any crystallizing point of view to give it meaning and free him from continuing to idealize his own confusion. He realizes that his wife's catholicism has no congruity with existing social patterns, but is only an appearance of order, a useful sublimation for her of her own sense of being adrift. But he does not realize that his return to her in her prosperous surroundings and the awakening of old attachments may lay him open to the very sublimation one part of his personality has been seeking strange aid to avoid. He has attained, it is true, a moment when he has been completely and without reservation of the working class. But it has been an experience such as Tolstoi may have had, and as such an imperfect experience because it has been of a working class that by not yet sensing its potentialities have not yet attained its integrity. But even if it had been a really integrating experience, it would have been insufficient because it has been achieved only at the end of the novel and has not had a chance to repeat itself over a period of time. Frank and his hero probably believe with the mystics that a moment of spiritual union is a permanent conversion. But not simply the Marxian philosophy, the very technique of his novel, the analytical method, insists that such moments, to be real and useful, must become habitual.

It it not, then, as a proletarian novel that *The Death and Birth of David Markand* is significant. The communist and proletarian must have his doubts whether David has been really reborn and must desire the further evidence of a sequel. The tremendous value of the novel is that it so thoroughly exposes the thorny road the bourgeois intellectual must follow if he is to become 'class-conscious of the proletariat.' The proletarian is rightly suspicious of his bourgeois allies. But his suspicion proceeds in a sense from the spontaneous protective provincialism of his own class. He would be hard pressed to articulate his reasons. They are here in Frank abundantly exposed. The bourgeois ally who is not brought into sympathy by being exposed to the same economic and physical environment through necessity, becomes drawn to the proletariat because he already possesses some attitude which is not normal to the ordinary bourgeois environment. Some, like Strachey, see so clearly the neat application of Marxian philosophy to the problems of modern life that they cannot resist its adoption. For others, some lurking hatred of their class, its Puritanism, its money-grubbing, its complete ignorance of art, finds in the social ideal of communism the definition of human life at its richest. But all of these cases are exceptional and they are all suspicious, for they do not reach down into the very basic demands of existence. It is not even enough for a bourgeois to lose his money. It is natural for him then to become a fascist. If he is to become an ally of the working class, the experience of Markand shows, it is only through the most arduous and gradual re-orientation of his interests and his personality toward a new basis; and fundamental to this

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re-orientation is the reciprocal activity of progressing towards a new philosophical consistency at the very time one is becoming part of the actual daily life of a class-conscious proletariat. For the bourgeois turned communist is gaining something at the price of upsetting all that he already has; whereas the bourgeois turned fascist is only trying to salvage with hate some fragment of a once more generous total. Waldo Frank has revealed this far-reaching psychological upheaval attendant upon a real shift from one class to another against the tide of bourgeois belief. Where his treatment is misleading is that he has put his action at a period when to make such a shift was least possible and most abnormal. For since the war the intellectual has had the aid, not to be belittled, because it is of the very ground-work of belief, that he is not alone in this transfer of his allegiance.

I am aware that my statements are somewhat unjust to a novel which, far from having a dull page, can scarcely be said to have an insignificant one. It brings the bourgeois reader with all his burden of superstructural necessities and demands for the first time in American fiction into a living experience of the misery and the grandeur of the proletariat. And it does this through the dialectic reaction of subjective and objective, through the spectacle of the more or less formed bourgeois personality meeting and being transformed by the outer impingement of vital proletarian life. But it should also be repeated that this meeting has taken place at an historical moment when the outcome could be neither definite nor satisfactory for either dialectic opponent.

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THE POETRY OF AUDEN AND SPENDER

POEMS, *by W. H. Auden. Random House.* $2.50.
POEMS, *by Stephen Spender. Random House.* $1.50.

Much has already been written about the work of the group of new English poets, who, graduates from Oxford and Cambridge, sons of the upperclass, deeply steeped in a literary tradition, have been drawn to the revolutionary movement and have expressed in their poetry a philosophy which draws much of its reasoning from the Communist analysis of capitalist society.

The publication in America of most of their collected poems to date indicates the wide sphere of interest both Auden and Spender have begun to command. And one can say, that the interest, despite their technical innovations, lies primarily in the fact that they are radical poets, that they present in poetry the same attraction for the middle and petty bourgeoisie, undergoing psychic as well as economic changes through the crisis, as the political analysis and the economic treatises of other middle class intellectuals. It is the role of the prophet crying in the bourgeois wilderness, the St. John of the middleclass, prophesying inevitable doom and the day of reckoning.

Auden writes:

"The falling leaves know it, the children
At a play on the fuming alkali top
Or on the flooding football field, know it—
This is the dragon's day, the devourer's . . ."

and again:

"Financier, leaving your little room
Where the money is made but not spent,
You'll need your typist and your boy no more;
The game is up for you and for the others . . ."

This is the leitmotif that runs in a continual undertone of threat throughout the poems of Auden. And like the prophet in the wilderness, crying doom to his class, he speaks continually in parables, in riddles, in veiled and double-meaning phrases. The Epiloque to *The Orators* is such a parable in which Auden hints at the journey onward that he is taking away from those who are crying "deceiver" or warning him that yonder is that treacherous valley. The metaphors of war are used as frequently as the mask of the parable. In *The Orators,* which is probably the most brilliant piece of satirical writing in postwar poetry, the whole middle section, called the *Journal of an Airman,* exploits a vastly extended war metaphor. The pages abound with the terminology of the aviation field, the trenches and the war manuals. The Enemy is not a foreign foe, but the Enemy of life. And in brilliant paradoxes, satirical tour de forces, dadaist epigrams and descriptions of the battles in verse and prose, Auden characterizes the Enemy, how he lives, what his habits are like, how he can be conquered. The sum total of these characteristics,

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when one understands Auden's point of view, clearly indicates that the Enemy is the bourgeoisie.

For example, Auden defines the Enemy:

"His collar was spotless; he talked very well;
He spoke of our homes and duty and we fell."

"Three kinds of enemy bearing—the condor stoop—the toad stupor —the robin's stance.

"Three kinds of enemy speech-I mean-quite frankly-speaking as a scientist, etc."

"Three enemy catchwords—insure now—keep smiling—safety first."

And so on. Auden, using what resembles almost the mad associations of the surrealists, satirizes the class that he hates, or to be more accurte, the people whom he hates.

The Orators is as yet Auden's most considerable accomplishment, and at the same time his most obscure work. It shows first that Auden's principal talents lie in the field of satire, a weapon he controls with a gusto and an imaginative irony, long absent from English verse. But at the same time it reveals that in *The Orators* the satirist loses himself in the objects he is satirizing. Auden is not yet the master of political satire, but more the buffoon; there is more Tristan Tzara than Jonathan Swift in his work.

In *The Orators* Auden is still criticizing capitalism from the standpoint of a rebellious individualism, from the point of view of the surrealist, the last of the romantics. The Epilogue indicates, however, that Auden has not ceased to travel. He is going somewhere. And *The Dance of Death* which follows is the terminal at which he has arrived. *The Dance of Death* is much clearer, simpler, more direct, more objective than *The Orators*. It is a critique of capitalism from the point of view of Marxism. It is a brilliant serio-comic caricature of present day society. The Dancer is capitalism, who is also death. Auden has come a far way from *The Orators*. With music-hall rhythms, the rhymes and emotions of popular tinpan alley songs, Auden pulls the puppets of the middleclass about the stage. He shows them grasping at every new cult, every new fad, from Sun Cure to Theosophy, in an effort to give meaning to their purposeless existence. Fascism appears and attracts them. Meanwhile the audience, the working class, howls them down, laughs and guys at their antics. Finally, the dancer dies from the disease he has given himself. And on the stage appears Karl Marx with two young communists.

"He is liquidated," says Karl Marx. "The instruments of production have been too much for him."

Undoubtedly there is something too mechanical in the sudden appearance of Karl Marx like History itself out of the wings. The whole conception of the revolution is too mechanical, too intellectual. It is a revolution of ideas, not people. Auden has grasped the idea; he still suffers from an upperclass snobbism about the potentialities of the working class.

But however limited Auden's understanding of the process of historical

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change may be, I much prefer the verve and comic gusto of his verse to the careful, manicured and melancholy feebleness of Stephen Spender's poetry. In Auden one can discern the possibilities of a master of political satire; in Spender one cannot see the growth of a strong revolutionary lyric talent. Spender shares with Auden the personal meanings, the personal interpretation of class history, that make his work at times so obscure. But in less degree than Auden does he give sharp, definite contours to these beliefs. At base, one might say of Spender that the fundamental struggle in his ideology is his inability to reconcile the world of art with the world of people. He still writes:

"The city builds its horror in my brain
This writing is my only wings away."

And technically, an inability to find that simple, hard image which would give form and depth to his writing. Everything is blurred, indefinite in the work of Spender. The thought hesitates, the verse creeps, the words poise on the edges of expression. Inadequate, is the best word to describe both the form and the content. Doubts persistently assail him: he cannot be sure that things will be, or that man will be better, or a different world is being born.

"Can be deception of things only changing. Out there
perhaps growth of humanity above the plain
hangs; not the timed explosion, oh but Time
monstrous with stillness like the himalayan range."

He is continually haunted by "shapes of emptiness" by "shapes of death"; poverty invokes from him pity; the thought of tomorrow and a classless state invokes noble feelings; but the pity is inadequate for the poverty it describes, and the nobility is suspect by the platitude it arouses. "Man will be Man."

In Auden one can trace a consistent and maturing growth in understanding from the early poems to *The Dance of Death*. The obscurity seems to be giving way to greater simplicity. But Spender's later poems seem to be working in reverse. The more political the content, the more crabbed and obscure becomes the execution.

ALFRED HAYES

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ANATOMY OF FASCISM

FASCISM AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION, *by R. Palme Dutt. International Publishers.* $1.50.

Students of the social sciences who have been influenced by American university courses, by the recommendations of the *Sunday Times Book Review* section, or by the offerings of the Calverton gang, look upon the theses of the Communist International as little more than sloganized dogmas. Without taking the trouble to study a C. I. document they usually dismiss it as a "badly written ukase."

This attitude is reflected even among American intellectuals who are overcoming the above-mentioned cultural lags, who are striving to correct their astigmatism with the aid of the lens of Marx and Lenin. While admitting the truth of the fundamental principles of historical materialism, they dismiss C. I. theses as "politically expedient" statements, designed for immediate agitational effect. They are under the impression that such documents are similar to the speeches of the average capitalist politician. Accustomed to think of the latter as a business man or as a lobbying artist, they do not realize that the proletarian "politician" is not only a practical man of action but a theoretician, a social scientist of the first rank. If these intellectuals will take the time to study the plenum addresses of the Comintern leaders, they will find analyses of social trends (of which the prediction of the current economic debacle is one of many classical examples) that make the most learned treatises of brain-trusters and social-planners sound like freshman themes.

But somehow these intellectuals never seem to read the literature of the C. I. Perhaps the fault is not entirely theirs. They are accustomed to look for a systematic treatment of social problems in a lengthy documented study rather than in a condensed political statement. There is an urgent need for such heavy artillery on the ideological front, for such books based upon the generalizations of the C. I., if Leninism is to cut its way deep into contemporary American thought.

Fascism and Social Revolution, by the editor of the British Labour Monthly, is one of the first of such volumes to reach these shores. Dutt has taken the precise definition of Fascism contained in the *Programme of the Communist International* and has used it as the basis for a systematic exposition of the subject. The book is an object lesson to intellectuals and laymen who have been misled by reactionary, liberal, and social-democratic analyses of Fascism. It uncovers the ignorance or the deliberate misrepresentation of idelogues who deny that Fascism is simply a new *tactic* of finance capitalism; who hide the concrete nature of Fascism beneath sophistical arguments about abstract democracy vs. abstract dictatorship; who paint it as a middle-class revolution; who blame Communism for the existence of Fascism, etc. In the space of this review it is possible to touch upon only a few of the aspects of the whole problem which Dutt investigates so thoroughly.

Answering the question, *Does Communism cause Fascism?,* Dutt points

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out that the existence of both Communism and Fascism are effects of the breakup of the capitalist system; and that, consequently, it is ridiculous to consider one effect to be the cause of the other. Moreover, he shows that in Italy Fascism came to power because a Communist movement did *not* exist; even reactionary and liberal historians admit that Communism was fully possible in Italy during September 1920, but it was prevented by the reformist leadership of the working class. In the case of Austria, Fascism was instituted in a country where Social-Democracy controlled practically the entire working class; in Russia, on the contrary, where all the workers followed Communism, it was never able to appear.

Dutt describes how the Social-Democratic leaders, playing the role of the heralds and footment of Fascism, distort even the question, *Is Fascism inevitable?* They command the workers not to fight until *after* Fascism takes over the state, thereby admitting the inevitability of its coming to power. The Communists, on the other hand, stress the necessity of smashing Fascism before it is given complete control of the capitalist state apparatus. As Dutt puts it, Fascism becomes inevitable only when the working class and its allies follow the line of reformism, refuse the united front, and put their faith in bourgeois democracy. When the entire working class follows the Communist program it can "pass straight to the socialist order with no costly or shameful Fascist interlude.

John Strachey has shown that accepting the inevitability of Fascism is not more dangerous than accepting its impossibility in "democratic" countries. This seems to be what Mr. H. M. Kallen, die-hard liberal, is driving at when he tells us, in recent symposium, that Fascism has beeen established "only in old countries without a genuine and tested tradition of freedom." It is fatal to be blind to the danger of this menace in bourgeois democratic countries. Fascism develops in and through the forms of bourgeois democracy. To place any faith in such institutions is to play directly into the hands of modern capitalism, which is abandoning parliamentary democratic forms for open class dictatorship.

Liberals and Social-Democrats who do precisely this, usually present the modern political dilemma as that of *Democracy vs. Dictatorship.* Dutt dissolves this argument with Bolshevik thoroughness: "The real issue is commonly confused by the vulgar propagandist treatment that the attack on 'democracy' is a parallel attack of Communism and Fascism. On the contrary, the critique of Communism or Marxism against capitalist democracy is not that it is 'too democratic' but that it is 'not democratic enough,' that it is in reality only a deceitful cover for capitalist dictatorship and that the real democracy for the workers can only be achieved when the proletarian dictatorship breaks the power of the capitalist class. The movement of modern capitalism, on the other hand, against parliamentary democracy is a movement to strengthen repression of the working class and establish the open and violent dictatorship of monopoly capital."

Dutt's answer to the question, *Is Fascism an independent revolutionary movement of the middle-class?* represents one of the most adequate sections of his book. As he mentions, the theory of Fascism as a petit-bourgeois

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revolution has been propounded not only by V. F. Calverton who recently described the NRA as a "direct anti-fascist front" and who stated previously, in a Current History article, that the "Roosevelt administration is not even a potential fascist regime"—but even by Scott Nearing. Stuart Chase has recently expressed the same point of view. It is true that fascist movements recruit their mass basis largely from the middle class, and at the beginning adopt hypocritical anti-capitalist slogans. But, as Dutt proves, Fascism "from the outset is fostered, nourished, maintained and subsidized by the big bourgeoisies." Moreover, it is "enabled to grow, and is saved from being wiped out in the early stages by the working class movement solely through the direct protection of the bourgeois dictatorship." Finally, it is ridiculous to assume that Fascism has ever "seized" power in any country, as Mr. Chase declares. "In every case Fascism has been placed in power from above by the bourgeois dictatorship. The bourgeoisie, in fact, has in practice passed power from one hand to the other and called it a "revolution,' "

One aspect of Fascism that is neglected in this book is the problem of its attitude toward culture. Of course it is difficult to devote much space to such a question in a socio-political study. Dutt does trace the connection between the dominant trends of modern capitalist ideology—the attack upon science and rationality—and the whole process of the economic decay of capitalism. He also points out how this ideology is not only the reflection of capitalist relationships but is also a reactionary weapon—with its race theories and other quackeries—used to keep capitalism in power a little longer. But he fails to deal with the treatment of culture under Fascism, particularly the nature of literature and art under fascist rule.

Despite this omission, the book is an invaluable antidote for intellectuals who have been poisoned by the reformist and revisionist interpretations of Fascism which are alredy legion in American thought.

ALAN CALMER

NEGROES AND WHITES

THE WAYS OF WHITE FOLKS, *by Langston Hughes. Alfred A. Knopf.* $2.50.

Those who have followed Langston Hughes' literary work for the last few years will be somewhat disappointed in this collection of fourteen stories.

There is no doubt that the author of this volume is one of the more talented among the younger American writers. He is, however, more than that. He is also known as one of the outstanding revolutionary interpreters of Negro life in America. And yet, there is very little that is revolutionary about *The Ways of White Folks.*

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We no longer, it is true, believe in the vulgar conception of revolutionary literature. We no longer believe that a revolutionary writer is he who indulges in "revolutionary" hysterics. Truth in our days, to repeat a much repeated phrase, is revolutionary. But to depict the truth of our present-day life is not a simple matter. To depict the truth one must have a thorough understanding of the conflicting forces in our society, and, what is more, one must have a broad vision. But Langston Hughes' vision, at least exemplified by this collection of stories, is, unfortunately, very limited.

Take, for instance, the story of *Cora Unashamed.* Cora Jenkins, a Negro woman, was one of the last of the citizens of the little miserable town of Melton. She worked for the Studevants. The Studevants were rich white people. They treated Cora as an inferior, as a dog. Cora stood it. She had to stand it or go jobless. "Cora was like a tree—once rooted, she stood, in spite of storms and strife, wind and rocks, in the earth." The woman's life was gray and uneventful except once when she fell in love with a white Wobbly who happened to pass through the town. The union was a short one. The Wobbly disappeared. Cora gave birth to a little girl. She called her Josephine, after Joe, the Wobbly. Cora did not go anywhere to have the child. Nor tried to hide. She was "humble and unashamed before the fact of the child." It was quite different with the Studevant's youngest daughter who was also going to have an illegitimate child. The girl wanted the child. Not so the Studevant family. It was a blot upon their life of fake respectability. The mother preferred the daughter's death to an illegitimate grandchild. The girl was forced to have an abortion. She died. Cora was indignant. The Studevant's criminal stupidity amazed her. Cora was unashamed.

I have given the gist of *Cora Unashamed* sowewhat at length not only because it is the most powerful story in the volume but also it gives us a clue to the Hughes' other stories.

Langston Hughes is a superb story teller. His style is lyrical and swift-moving except when he labors hard to achieve a jazz effect. Also, his characters are real and alive. They suffer, however, from one weakness: they never think; they just feel.

Cora is elemental. She is naive, simple and static, like "a tree—once rooted she stood, in spite of storms and strife." All Negro characters in *The Ways of White Folks*—whether they are artists or workers—are elemental, naive, simple and static.

Is that the truth? Perhaps. Only it is a limited truth. Certainly it is no longer symbolic of all the Negroes in America. Although Langston Hughes is supposed to be a revolutionary writer, the drama of the rising revolutionary consciousness of the Negro masses in America has altogether escaped him.

Cora's story, the author will say, is dramatic. True enough. But is the story of the thinking and fighting Negroes any less dramatic? Is the story of Angelo Herndon any less dramatic?

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And if it was the author's intention to depict primarily the relation between whites and Negroes, why should he have limited himself to elemental Negroes and diseased, sophisticated or queer and sex-starved white rich ladies?

What about the relation between white and black workers? What about the relation between Negro and white sharecroppers fighting hand in hand in the South?

LEON DENNEN

CHINESE EPIC

CHINA'S RED ARMY MARCHES, *by Agnes Smedley. International Publishers.* $1.60.

Miss Smedley's book almost makes the office of criticism superfluous. Her material is so momentous, and her rendering of this material is so straightforward, that the book becomes a *fact*. Here is the story of the building up of the Chinese Soviet Republic and the Chinese Red Army—the epic of six years' revolution against the bloodiest suppression of the foreign imperialists, and their agent, the traitorous Kuomintang. One sees this army—"half army, half partisan"— marching ragged and barefoot and famished over snow-covered mountains. One sees it camping at night, and overhears the conversation of the peasants, artisans, and workers who form the ranks. It marches forth to an engagement, outnumbered three to one, armed only with spears, bamboo clubs and hoes, facing the machine guns and cannon of the imperialist forces. "The Chinese Red Army does not have one gun from Soviet Russia. All of its weapons have been captured from the Kuomintang armies sent to suppress it; all bear the stamp of munition dealers of foreign capitalist powers." The partisans give a life for a gun, or, as frequently happens, the White troops, peasants and workers themselves, go over wholesale to the Red Army, deserting their imperialist leaders and surrendering their munitions. The Red Army fights with propaganda as well as with bullets. At night, or in the lull of battle, it shouts to the White troops: "Brothers of the White Troops, why do you fight for the capitalists and imperialists? Land to the peasants and soldiers! Eight hour day for the workers!" For the Red Army as a whole it is a record of superhuman heroism and endurance for the individual partisan. And as one reads, one has hardly the feeling of seeing all this through the eyes of another person. The epic seems to unfold directly, as if there were not the agency of an observer between the events and the reader.

This impression, of witnessing the events first hand, comes from the quality of Miss Smedley's reporting. Her reporting is objective, pruned of all non-essentials, innocent of all striving for effect; and it is informed with a political realism that lifts it above the sort of journalism which

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has recently won the name of *reportage*—that form of reporting the crimes of imperialist countries where a sensational treatment of effect is substituted for an intelligent understanding of causes. Much has been omitted from the book that another writer would have been tempted to put in—for instance, all the Oriental quaintness, the saccharine, pseudo-Biblical folk material, that Pearl Buck has recently purveyed to western readers, under the guise of interpreting China. The interpretation of present-day China, as Miss Smedley sees it, is now essentially an interpretation of the political and economic forces that are in conflict there. Miss Smedley has none of that Western chauvinism that expresses itself in the phrase: "the fascination of the Orient." Her purpose has been to resolve the age-old antithesis between West and East, to express the East in the universal language of present-day class conflicts, to present the Chinese peasant with such immediacy that the mid-western farmer, suffering the double visitation of the drought and the AAA, will at once feel his kinship with the Chinese farmer, oppressed by famine and debt-ridden to the landlords. She has aimed not at emphasizing the cultural and psychological differences between East and West, but at showing basic economic similarities. These differences must, of course, exist, and their importance cannot be negated. But Miss Smedley's writing does drive home one fact: that cultural and psychological differences between East and West are only surface conformations over the universal, rock-bottom class struggle; and that the class struggle, in violent eruption, is shattering all cultural surfaces, making of them everywhere only shifting landmarks.

I have said that the book is informed with political realism, that is to say, Miss Smedley emphasizes the class motivations in her narrative, omitting research into individual psychologies, into individual history. She has not spoken at length of certain realistic aspects of the Red Army's progress —aspects of which she gives us a hint when she quotes the orders of the Army leaders disciplining the Army, forbidding murder, rape, and looting on the part of the victorious peasants. Class-biased critics will seize on this, and say that Miss Smedley has idealized the army, and misrepresented the truth. But the "truth" that Miss Smedley wishes to present is a very specific and pragmatic truth, and not the universal truth of human nature, which critics invoke when the work of radical writers offends their class interests. She wishes us to know precisely what is happening in China; and when she quotes the disciplinary orders of the Red Army, she gives the gist of the whole situation: the disruptive individual act, the individual will does exist; but the Red Army is a powerful force, channeling the will of millions of partisans toward constructive social ends.

Besides, we are witnessing a revolution in literature where political realism becomes also an æsthetic quality. When bourgeois critics inveigh against propaganda on the part of radical writers, what they really object to is that the radical writer substitutes political realism for the old bourgeois realism. Here the critic may be using æsthetics to hide a class bias, or his objection may arise from a sincere belief that the æsthetics of literature is a series of fixed and immutable canons without historical

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development, and that there is only one kind of realism. But if the term has any meaning, realism means the completest possible view of human motivations; and as society aligns itself more and more in an overt class struggle, class motivations become a conscious part of each individual's psychological equipment. So that a book that ignores class-motivations in our time is truly unrealistic. One great contribution of bourgeois realism was the discovery of sex; but this discovery was not an immaculate conception on the part of bourgeois writers. It had its origin in the disintegration of bourgeois society, and particularly in the disintegration of the family relationship. That was one revolution in literature. Now all the talk on "propaganda in art" shows that another revolution is in progress. And the new psychological dimension that the critics are unwilling to accept is called by a derogatory term—"propaganda." Just as the discovery of sex, before it was accepted, had its opprobrious designation from the critics, and was known as *smut*.

But Miss Smedley's political realism is justified not only from the point of view of æsthetics, but from a utilitarian point of view. For her book, like the Red Army that it tells about, is also embattled, waging a war against the world-wide slandering of the Red Army. Throughout the capitalist world the Red Army is a horde of "bandits"—while the most brutal exploitation of the peasantry and industrial workers by the landlords and foreign imperialists, and the official murder of tens of thousands of red partisans by the Kuomintang, is condoned.

GERTRUDE DIAMANT

ON THE RUINS OF THE OLD GHETTOS

WHERE THE GHETTO ENDS, *by Leon Dennen. Alfred H. King, Inc.* $2.50.

Dennen's method in "Where the Ghetto Ends" is one of obliqueness, and through it he gains a curious, casual force. Limiting himself, first of all, to the study of a national minority, the Jews both within and outside of Russia, he throws an indirect but immensely revealing light upon the whole program of the U. S. S. R., its aims, actual achievements, and the difficulties that confront it in reaching a solution not only of the racial, but of all other problems, a solution which Dennen shows cannot be anything but socialist. Or as he states in his introduction, with a naivete that can hardly be other than deliberate: "The Soviet leaders are Marxists and, like Marx, they believe the Jewish question to be simply an economic problem deeply rooted in the existence of bourgeois society. . . It is in the light of this theory that Soviet leaders set out to solve the problems of the Jews and also of the other numerous national minorities . . . Whether one agrees with Communism or not, one must realize that the attempt of the Soviet Government to solve the Jewish problem is not merely a gesture but is inherent in the Soviet philosophy."

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Then, by contrasting the oppressed, hunted, hopeless condition of the Jews in Poland and Germany—including reference to the rise of anti-Semitism in the United States, upon which ominous note the book closes—with the constantly widening future of all people in the U. S. S. R., Dennen, with little argument, and no need for any, gives double strength to his thesis. Facts and figures are quoted with a spareness, throughout this book couched in the mild, discursive vein of a travelogue, that gives them a vitality not usually connected with cold statistics. And there is conviction, also, in the refusal to minimize socialist difficulties in the USSR, or to gloss over the tragedies of those of the older generation who cannot orientate themselves to the new life. Of the Soviet aims, and some of the obstacles to be overcome in realizing them, Dennen says, conservatively: "The ghetto Jew is gradually being transformed into a new man. I say gradually, for it must not be imagined that the settling of the Jews on land in Soviet Russia has already been accomplished. It is only beginnig . . . The Soviet Government, it is commonly assumed, is capable of accomplishing in a decade what it took other governments to accomplish in a century. That, in a sense, is true. That is the power of revolution. One, however, cannot rid himself so quickly of a heritage in which he has been rooted for centuries and centuries . . . For one thing, the Jew is traditionally a city man . . . Secondly, there is that 'class conflict' within the Jewish race itself, which, even as among the Russian peasantry, is an obstacle in the path of Jewish colonization in Russia. In its broader aspect, Jewish colonization is organically linked up with the agricultural revolution that has been taking place in Soviet Russia—the movement to collective Russian land. It is this movement which is undoubtedly the outstanding factor in the Soviet program." Or of the fate of some of the older Jews, there is a tragic picture of the dying, forgotten city of "S." Bad as it is, however, it does not compare with the misery across the border, in Poland and in the one German city touched upon, Hamburg.

"Where the Ghetto Ends" is overwhelmingly convincing in its totality, not only as a thorough and truthful work of reporting, but also in its underlying conclusions, the revolutionary conclusions by which the events are interpreted. But there are moments in the book when, the reader feels, Dennen could have laid aside his mild and inquisitive manner of a tourist, could have "cashed-in" upon this unpretentiousness, to speak with greater finality, to give bolder, harsher expression to a theme that is harsh and bold.

KENNETH FEARING

A SELF-PORTRAIT

NOT I, BUT THE WIND, *by Frieda Lawrence, The Viking Press.* $2.75.

After all the obscene little soul brides, both male and female, have had their say about Lawrence, it is good to come on this book of memoirs which tells simply, honestly, and through the fresh and wholesome vision of the

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vigorous Frieda what life was like with the petulant and irascible coal-miner's son, the parvenu who could never forget his class origin.

Not I, but the Wind might have been a more important book. It might have spoken conclusively about the Middleton Murry-Lawrence controversy. It might have dealt more specifically with Lawrence's problems and his methods, and in doing so would have given us the first definitive biography of the man. Perhaps too many of the people concerned are still alive for Frieda to have spoken freely, or it may be that the pressure of the Carswell, Brett and Luhan volumes led Frieda Lawrence to tell merely the story of her own life with the writer.

In the telling there is little added to Lawrence biographia, though, occasionally a detail does succeed in revealing already-known material more profoundly. In this light it is worth noting the emphasis Frieda Lawrence places again and again on the class origins of the writer and her recognition of the role of the class differences in the difficulties of their life together. Or writing of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* she says . . . . *"He had done it . . . and future generations will benefit, his own race that he loved and his own class, that is less inhibited, for he spoke out of them and for them. . . ."*

The genuinely critical biography that will trace the story of this man who lost his class and who, as early as 1923, had already expressed most of the elements of fascist ideology and consciousness—the mystery of the blood—the corruption of the cerebral man—the demonology and mythology that he shares with the psycho-analyst Jung, another fascist ideologue, etc.—telling how in his later years he repudiated his mother and his mother's world and made the turn toward his father that would have led him back to the workingclass, still remains to be written.

The book contains many hitherto unpublished letters that will reveal Lawrence in a tender light. But it is as a self portrait of Frieda that the volume should be approached; it is a just and excellent portrait.

NATHAN ADLER.

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PROLETARIAN MAGAZINES

BLAST, *a bi-monthly of proletarian short stories, edited by Fred R. Miller. Nos.* 4 *and* 5.

THE ANVIL, *a bi-monthly of proletarian stories and poems, edited by Jack Conroy. Nos.* 7 *and* 8.

LEFTWARD, *a monthly published by the John Reed Club of Boston. Vol.* 1. *No.* 1.

It is good to realize that while Mr. H. L. Menken was recently fuming and sputtering away on his typewriter, telling the world in his stale near-beer style that the production of little magazines, particularly proletarian magazines, was a fad that was doomed to die the next minute or so, two or three lusty proletarian magazines were being born and the already-established proletarian magazines were issuing new numbers so excellent in quality as to make Mr. Mencken's super-hysteria sound like plaintive meows. Whether Mr. Mencken likes it or not, the fact remains that revolutionary little magazines are not only dominating the field but are compelling most literary-minded intellectuals to take definite stands and tell the world about it. Some of these intellectuals, by a tremendous effort, manage to maintain a half-suspended position while they pray for inspiration and a fashionable Utopia. Others prefer fences, particularly the liberal element of our young writers who, through the flying-trapeze movements of academicians, faddists and nature-neckers are sweating blood and adjectives to give their fence-straddling position some vestige of dignity.

Occasionally, we find fence straddlers, of the variety I mention, in the company of writers who have their feet on the ground. I find such a combination in the last few issues of *Provincetown.* Its regular contributors consisted (the magazine has been temporarily discontinued) of revolutionary writers and contributors who refer to themselves as liberals, although in practice they reveal distinct tendencies toward Fascism. A few months ago a *Provincetown* liberal wrote an article accusing communist intellectuals of being faddists, overlooking the obvious point that if being a communist intellectual is a fad, then so is unemployment, so is hunger, so is the danger of war and fascism. This is only one instance of the fallacious thinking that is to be seen in such magazines that dare not subscribe "to any particular creed," but stick their tail of impartiality in the air as though it were a banner instead of a tail. Yet, in the pages of these same magazines some excellent contributions in revolutionary writing have crept in. Particularly I have in mind the work of Edward McSorley, whose fragments from a full-length work have been appearing in *Provincetown,* overshadowing anything else published in that periodical. His full length work, when and if published, should make a fine contribution to the library of revolutionary literature. McSorley is only one of the many revolutionary writers to be found in "liberal" magazines. Their work, appearing in the tedious midst of liberal writings, furnishes a striking contrast.

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For impressive proof that the revolutionary little magazines are the only ones contributing anything vital to the development of American literature, one has only to read the last couple numbers of *Blast* and the most recent issue of *The Anvil.* The stories in *Blast* are, on the whole, mature expressions of writers who are learning to combine the strength of their Marxian convictions with good writing. Paul Cory's *Nine Pennies* is a brilliant portrait of a well-to-do woman who likes to think of herself as a philanthropist, yet is unable to resist the temptation of tossing dirt on her fellow man when the real test of her philanthropy comes. Without forcing his theme, Cory creates a memorable, satirical effect. His experience, gained through an industrious apprenticeship with little magazines, is welding him into a writer who recognizes values and applies them with keen discrimination. Alfred Qualey's *Venetia Macintosh,* appearing in the same issue, is another portrait, that of a Negro woman, poor in health, who forces herself through the motions of earning a few pennies. Like Cory's *Nine Pennies,* it also deals with a well-off woman who has "good intentions" but vicious inclinations. It is unfortunate that a story like this one does not get a wider audience, especially among women who can identify themselves in the story. William Carlos Williams has a contribution in the new issue of *Blast* entitled *A Night in June,* treating of one of his experiences in the capacity of physician. It is a meticulous and vivid account of a woman, already over-burdened with children, giving birth to another. Like most of Williams' stories I have head, this is excellent naturalistic writing, but it has static qualities about it that make it fall short of revolutionary literature. Not much happens in Fred Miller's story *The Talked About and the Seen,* but nevertheless it has a sense of movement, of change, that Williams' short stories usually lack. This writer has a facility for easy, unaffected writing, and though he too frequently falls into the device of having somebody else relate the story, he is highly readable and original. Like Edward Newhouse, whose novel *You Can't Sleep Here* is due to appear shortly, he is one of our few writers who can write brightly without losing his sense of reality. I recommend Newhouse and Miller to Tess Slessinger. Louis Lerman's *A Class in English,* in No. 4 of *Blast,* is about a group of unemployed workers, members of a New York Italian Club, who are learning enough English to demand food and unemployment at their demonstrations. For a story as brief as this is, the incidents and the settings are unusually varied; yet the total effect is a vivid and well-integrated unit.

The same worker's club serves as material for another short story, *We Are Doing All We Can* by Alfred Garrick which appears in No. 7 of *Anvil.* Garrick's characters, however, fail to attain life. If the author had reported the incident he treats of in less pretentious style, I believe he might have achieved a more realistic effect. *Brickyard* by Howard Rushmore, in the same issue, is a collective short story involving three men, one of them a foreman, two of them workers. Rushmore handles this comparatively unusual form with a skill that makes

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its theme convincing. In a story like Leonard Spier's *Battle in Embryo,* on the other hand, we find too many traces of the "placard" manner. The action—is not developed fully enough to give the situations and the characters life; the result is a blurred impression of slogans. *Dry Summer* by Sanora Babb, the lead-off story in the current *Anvil,* is a sensitively written story about a western farming family that is hit by the drought. The revolutionary viewpoint of the writer is not defined in this story by the obvious cliches that so many of our young revolutionary writers fall into, but by the tragic implications that emanate naturally from its well developed theme.

Leftward, a magazine published by the John Reed Club of Boston, makes it re-appearance with an issue which purports to be "The New Masses of New England." The magazine has an impressive staff of contributing editors, but it can hardly hope to achieve the facilities that the *New Masses* already has. Since the scope of the *New Masses* is to reach the entire nation, it seems a serious mistake for the John Reed Club to assume New England is not part of the audience that the *New Masses* is trying to reach. The wisest bet of the editors would be to publish a literary magazine that would draw out the creative revolutionary talent of writers in Boston—or anywhere else, for that matter, rather than a magazine which, at its best, would be a poor competitor of the *New Masses.*

JERRE MANGIONE

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NATIONAL JOHN REED CLUB CONFERENCE

The national meeting of the John Reed Clubs, held in Chicago the last week in September, opened with the reading of a radiogram which had been received from the Secretariat of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers. Greeting the conference in the name of the world revolutionary movement, the Secretariat called upon the members of the Clubs to "give the best of their creative powers to the task of fighting fascism, war and reaction and the building of a socialist culture in America."

Among the writers and artists present were Jack Conroy, Meridel Le Sueur, Alan Calmer, Orrick Johns, J. S. Balch, Joe Jones, Nelson Algren, William Pillin, Philip Rahv, Alfred Hayes, Wallace Phelps, A. B. Magil, Bill Jordan, Mark Marvin, Paul Romaine, Gilbert Rocke, Jan Wittenber, Jack Kainen, Boris Gorelick, M. Childs, and others. Many new faces were to be seen, showing the extent to which the Clubs had been drawing into their work the numerous young writers and artists who had been appearing in the revolutionary magazine during the last few years.

Alfred Hayes, who presented the opening address for the writers, stressed the importance of the widespread campaign led by the American League Against War and Fascism, and indicated the necessity of the cultural movement breaking down its sectarian approach, in order to win large sections of the American intellectuals in the fight against the two monsters of modern capitalism.

The others members of the writers' commission unanimously denounced the "leftist" character of some aspects of our young revolutionary literature. They condemned those practices in our work that lead fellow-travelers to think that they must become revolutionary-proletarian writers overnight. They directed a collective attack against writing which consists of unconvincing, sloganized tracts disguised as poetry and fiction.. Together they showed that a living revolutionary literature could grow only out of genuine aesthetic recreation of the class struggle. In this connection, the discussion in the writers' commission indicated that *Partisan Review* was exerting a wide influence among the young writers.

A. B. Magil, who was one of the John Reed Club delegates to the Kharkov Conference in 1930, point-

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ed to the advances of our revolutionary literature in the struggle for Marxism since that historic meeting. J. B. Balch dramatized the sectarian approach of the movement toward sympathetic writers by showing how several of them had been frightened away by inflexible tactics. Meridel Le Sueur presented a rich, moving analysis of some of the problems involved in the creation of revolutionary fiction. Wallace Phelps discussed the role of the John Reed Club magazines, showing their effectiveness as literary organs and demonstrating the importance of their creative reportage. Philip Rahv dealt with the lessons of the Soviet Writers Congress and defined the nature of bourgeois influence on proletarian writers.

Joseph North dealt with the importance of the *"New Masses* in winning the middle class intellectuals and professionals away from fascism and reaction. He called upon the Clubs to take a more active part in extending the influence of the magazine.

Reports of the artists' commission revealed the importance of a revolutionary program in winning the economic demands of hundreds of artists and in turning them against war and fascism. Boris Gorelick of New York and Joe Jones of St. Louis, demonstrated the vast opportunities for the organization of artists on an economic basis. In one report, Jack Kainen analyzed the dangers of the rise of a national chauvinist school of painting in this country.

Alexander Trachtenberg brought the greetings of the Communist Party to the conference. He stressed the importance of a creative revolutionary literature in the fight against capitalism and joined in denouncing the sectarianism of the cultural movement, pointing out that we frequently underestimated the radicalization of American writers and artists. He proposed that the National Committee of the John Reed Clubs take the initiative in organizing a National Writers' Congress in this country within the next six or eight months; also the organization of a Workers' Book Club that would spread Marxist theoretical and creative work.

The concluding address was made by Orrick Johns, who was elected national secretary. The new National Committee includes Wallace Phelps, Alfred Hayes, Alan Calmer, Meridel Le Sueur, Jack Conroy, Paul Romaine, Richard Wright, Joe Jones, Boris Gorelick, Ben Bavly and Gilbert Rocke.

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